

Journal, 1909.  
(January - May)

at  
7  
- Dec.







See brief description of Courtship &  
Love act, by W. H. More Bird Song, Oct 1890, vol II, p. 157.  
Also Townsend's Bird Song A. p. 137, 138,

Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

1909

Feb. 27

9.20 to

10.30 a.m.

(1)

Cloudless but somewhat hazy with light easterly wind  
alternating with periods of dead calm. Ther. 26° min. 42° max.

I saw and heard this morning for the first time  
and under exceptionally favorable conditions, the Courtship  
actions and love notes of the American Goldeneye,

*Clangula clangula americana*. Dr. C. W. Townsend gave me

some account of them last year just after witnessing them

in February or March. On February 24 of <sup>the present</sup> ~~this~~ year he

told me the birds had already begun to perform on the

22<sup>nd</sup>, I think). When I learned this I resolved to take

advantage of the first favorable opportunity to learn

something of the matter on first hand.

When I left our house this morning, about 9 o'clock,

the sky was cloudless but a thin mist or haze obscured

distant objects. The air had a sharp, frosty "tang" although

the thermometer had already risen to 34°. There was

Ceremonials &  
Courtship of  
*Clangula c.*  
*americana*

Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

1909.

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1902/

Whistler  
society

a light easterly wind but it began to die away soon after I reached my destination and alighted from the electric car at the further end of Harvard Bridge.

No birds of any kind were then visible above the water of the bridge but just below it I at once saw fifty or fifty Golden-eyes scattered about singly, in pairs, and in small flocks, on the slightly ruffled water.

Walking down the roadway at the rear of the line of houses that front on Beacon Street I came to a pile of lumber (on the recently filled parkway lane) about one hundred yards from the bridge and on the very edge of the river. Here I found a comfortable seat on which I remained for over an hour watching the birds through my glass and taking down brief notes of their behavior from time to time. The lumber screened me somewhat from their view but I doubt if this made

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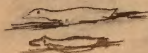


1.



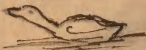
Crouching Posture

2.



Wounded duck posture

3.



Bowing posture

4.



Topmast posture

5.



Folded duck skin posture with occiput touching rump.

6.



Do. with occiput resting on middle of back

7.



Normal attitude of swimming or floating

Original sketches by W. B.  
made on the morning of Feb. 27  
just after returning from  
the Back Bay Basin. Some  
are better, others are good,  
than the sketches made  
later for the journal.



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(No 3)

Whistler  
Courtskip.

any particular difference for they seemed to pay little or no heed when I stood up and walked about.

Those nearest at hand were within shot-gun range, those furthest removed not over two hundred yards away; the others were dispersed over the intermediate space, occurring most numerously, perhaps, about midway between its outer and inner confines one hundred yards or so from where I sat. As many of them kept diving and shifting under water from one group to the next it was impossible to count them accurately but the total number was not far from sixty. There were about <sup>perhaps</sup> thirty fully adult males, ~~x~~ ten immature males (showing only a little white on cheeks and scapulars), and some twenty females. Most of the females appeared to have unicolored and dark brown or blackish bills but one showed a conspicuous bar of golden yellow on the

Females

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aluminum first behind the nail and a well marked  
dusky band crossing the white on the wing. This bird  
was evidently closely similar to the one I sent to  
Professor Bond in December 1871, which he pronounced  
to be an example of "Bucphala Islandica" but which I  
afterwards concluded was an aberrant specimen of Americanus.

Whistler  
Courtsip.

Aberrent  
♀ bird.

Another female had a short, abruptly tapered bill which  
appeared to be almost wholly of a rich chrome yellow color

Clangula  
Islandica,

♀

same on the nail which was dusky. It had conspicuous  
black wing bands while the brown of its head and neck  
and the ash on its breast were at least two shades  
deeper than in any of the other females. Its head,  
moreover, had a purplish sheen which showed every time  
the sunlight struck at just the right angle. All these  
things I saw most plainly for the bird was twice  
within forty yards of me and for half an hour within



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Whistling  
Courtskip.

Clangula  
islandica  
♀

one hundred yards while it was repeatedly joined by one or more females of the Common Golden-eye with which I was thus enabled to directly compare it. Although this evidence should not be regarded as sufficient to establish a positive record of the occurrence of Barrow's Golden-eye in the Back Bay Basin I have really no doubt whatever that the bird to which it relates was a perfectly typical representative of that species. Dr. C. W. Townsend saw a similar looking bird near the same place on February 22. He told me about it on the 24<sup>th</sup> when he expressed his conviction that it was an example of islandica. I saw another, in every respect similar, in the Basin off the mouth of Stony Brook on March 1. There can be little doubt, I think, that all three of these instances relate to one and the same individual bird. On the morning



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Whistle  
Courtship.

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of March 1 she was alone and on that of February, 27  
she kept for the most part by herself but on the latter  
occasion she was repeatedly joined by typical females of  
americana and once she swam a long distance in company  
with the female having the yellow bar on the bill, both birds  
being followed and most assiduously courted by seven  
or eight full plumaged drakes of the Common Goldeneye  
who, moreover, continued to thus devote themselves to the  
typical Bonaparte female after the other bird of the same  
sex (the aberrant americana) had left her to join another  
group.

Clangula  
islandica  
♀ wooed  
by drakes of  
Clangula  
americana.

I had not been long at the lumber pile when the  
wind died away completely. During the next half hour  
the entire Basin was, for the most part, without a  
ripple and shining in the sunlight like a burnished  
mirror. The haze, too, had almost wholly disappeared.

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(No 7)

As the sun was behind me its light aided, rather than interfered with, my observation of the Golden-eyes.

Whistler  
Courtship.

The females were comparatively inconspicuous, partly because of their sober coloring but also, I thought, because they habitually sank themselves deeper in the water than did the males. The latter, whether adult or immature, floated very lightly showing the greater part of their bodies above the surface. The full plumaged ones were handsome birds ~~distinctly~~ <sup>strongly</sup> contrasting black and white coloring made them conspicuous under all conditions and at long distances. When they were near at hand I could see the greenish iridescence on their big, fluffy heads glisten and shimmer in the sunlight. They were evidently quite aware of their personal attractiveness and, indeed, devoted themselves to calling it to the attention of the females by

Females  
look small  
& inconspicuous  
in water

Old drakes  
showy &  
conspicuous



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Boston, Mass.

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Feb. 27.  
(nos)

a variety of odd and interesting motives some of which were calculated to display it to the best advantage. They kept calling, also, uttering a queer strident note wholly new to me. The males which were thus engaged were incessantly swimming to and fro, shifting from one group of birds to another and ever seeking or following the females with tireless persistence, but without haste and with a decorous restraint of manner most unusual in courting birds and very interesting to behold. By no means all the ducks took part in these proceedings. There were at least five or six of these handsome fellows, two of whom remained apart from the others, either in solitary state or each in company with a female apparently its mate, and who ~~disregarded the proceedings~~, during the entire time I had them under observation.

Whistle  
courtship.

Manner in  
which ducks  
pursue the  
females.

Indifferent  
ducks

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Whistler  
Courtship.

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in diving for food or floating idly on the glossy  
surface, preening their feathers every now and then.

The others, while actively employed in "showing off"  
in the presence of the females, indulged, as I have  
said, in a variety of movements, gyrations and  
postures all more or less grotesque and probably most  
of them peculiar to the season of love making if  
not also essentially characteristic of the ceremony  
of Whistler courtship. I saw them all repeated  
many times, under conditions very favorable for  
close and accurate observation. For convenience of  
treatment in describing them I shall first  
designate them respectively by the following terms  
which, if somewhat formalized, are, I trust, appropriate  
or, at least, helpful, suggestions:

Dances  
"Showing off"  
before the  
females.



Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.


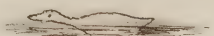



Whistler  
Countship

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(1909)

Gesticulations.

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. The <u>nod</u> - made with the head.                     | <u>Nod.</u>           |
| 2. The <u>kick</u> - made upward with one or both (?) feet. | <u>Kick.</u>          |
| 3. The <u>forward thrust</u> - of the head and neck.        | <u>Forward Thrust</u> |
| 4. The <u>upward thrust</u> " " " " "                       | <u>Upward Thrust</u>  |
| 5. The <u>back thrust</u> " " " " "                         | <u>Back Thrust</u>    |

Fixed and Peculiar Attitudes

- |                                     |   |                           |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 1. The <u>crouching pose</u> .      |    | <u>Crouching pose</u>     |
| 2. The <u>wounded duck pose</u> .   |    | <u>Wounded duck pose.</u> |
| 3. The <u>bow-spiral pose</u>       |    | <u>Bow-spiral pose.</u>   |
| 4. The <u>most head pose</u>        |   | <u>Most head pose.</u>    |
| 5. The <u>folded duck-skin pose</u> |  | <u>Folded skin pose.</u>  |

To these should be added for purposes of comparison:

6. The normal pose - is the position ordinarily

Normal attitude



taken by birds of both sexes



when floating or swimming about.

Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

Whistle  
Courtship.

1909.  
Feb. 27  
(No. 11)

Love call.

The love note to which I have alluded may be known as the bleat. I do not like this name for it is not accurately suggestive of the sound although it comes nearer being so than any other term I can think of hence its adoption.

After hearing it hundreds of times this morning I should describe it as a short, flat, vibrant pääp not unlike that of the Woodcock but a trifle more prolonged and also less harsh and incisive. It reminded me somewhat of the bleat of a fenny trumpet and less forcibly of the wheezy quack of a drake Black Duck. It did not seem loud when uttered within fifty yards of me yet I could hear it distinctly at four or five times that distance when the air was still. It was sometimes doubled (pääp-pääp) and occasionally tripled (pääp-pää-pää). I suspected at first that



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Whistler  
Courtship.

Love call

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these doubled and trebled notes were produced by two or three birds calling nearly together but on studying them closely I found that their component pairs or syllables were each shorter than the normal single call and otherwise slightly different. This led me to conclude that the compound notes were probably produced by single birds. Negative evidence supporting this inference was furnished by the fact that whenever I was able to watch several drakes performing in company I noticed that they always called in orderly succession, at distinctly separate intervals, and that their notes were of normal length and form. The intervals were often very brief, however, and when many or ten birds were engaged at once their combined voices produced a volume of sound loud and high continuous and lasting, perhaps, for half a minute or more. This, softened by distance and coming over the glass,

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1909.

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(no. 13)

Whistler  
Courtskip

Love call

sun-lit water from just where it would have been difficult to determine had not its authors been plainly visible, was by no means unpleasing in its general effect.

But when the fringe was heard near at hand and critically regarded it did not impress me so favorably.

It is, indeed, distinctly unmusical and at all times

far less attractive in quality than the humming-bird sound made by the wings in flight, to which the

Sound of  
wings in  
flight.

Whistler owes its familiar name, and which was

much in evidence this morning whenever the birds

were moving from place to place. They rose from the water with great apparent ease and almost as quickly

Birds rise  
easily from  
water.

as Black Ducks, despite the absence of wind. When they alighted they often struck the water almost as if

Birds  
alight  
heavily.

sped, just after closing their wings, sending the spray flashing up into the sunbeam and plunging furrows



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Whistler  
Courtship.

yards in length as they slid over the surface before  
losing the impetus of flight. Besides the beat and  
the whistling of wings I heard ~~them~~ <sup>no other</sup>  
sound this morning.

Spray  
kicking.

Just as the paap was uttered - or perhaps a  
fraction of a second later - a slender shower or spout  
of water, not unlike that emanating from an old-fashioned  
~~imitate~~ ~~big~~ ~~water~~ ~~fall~~ ~~or~~ ~~night~~ ~~fall~~ (but by no means  
invariably) be seen rising immediately behind the bird to  
a height of one or two feet. Sometimes it was thrown  
almost straight upward but often it followed a long  
elliptical or bow-shaped, backward curve. The heavier drops  
falling to the surface within a yard of the bird, the  
lighter ones striking two or three yards ~~away~~ <sup>at a distance</sup>. This  
jet-like puff of mingled drops and spray was  
sometimes conspicuous at a distance of forty or more

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Whistler  
Courtship.

Picking up  
water.

of a mile. It was produced, without question, by a vigorous, and obviously most dextrous, upward kick of the Whistler's broad webbed feet which, indeed I saw plainly, more than once, jerked out of water just as the last drops were ascending into the air. When, as occasionally happened, the jet was doubled in volume and also apparently somewhat divided on the base, I thought that the bird had made use of both feet at once but of this I could not be sure as I never actually saw more than one of them.

owing to its force and direction the kick caused the hinder portions of the bird's body to sink perceptibly in the water for an instant after which these parts bobbed still more obviously upward before assuming the position usual to the floating or swimming bird.



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Whistling  
Courtskip

Crouching  
posture.

The crouching posture. This was usually assumed directly from the normal swimming attitude and by an almost instantaneous movement. The head being thrust forward well above the surface, the neck deeply curved, the back somewhat humped. After remaining in this position absolutely motionless for two or three seconds the bird would either resume the normal attitude or change to The wounded duck posture. When behaving thus the bird would lay its head and extended neck flat on the surface and immerse its body so deeply that from bill to tail it showed no part <sup>much</sup> higher than the rest, looking, indeed, like a perfectly straight stick or reed stem, partly submerged. I have frequently seen a wounded Black Duck, Wood Duck or Blue-winged Teal do nearly if not exactly the same thing when trying to escape observation. The Golden-eyes maintained

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Boston, Mass.

Whistler  
Courtship

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(no 17)

this position anywhere from one or two to eight  
or ten seconds at a time.

Forward thrust of head and neck ending in



Bow-pose posture.

Forward thrust

Bow-pose  
posture.

The drakes assumed this attitude by suddenly thrusting  
their heads and necks forward and upward from the normal  
position (this was evidently the usual way) or by raising them  
more slowly from the crouching or the crouched duck posture.  
I saw them take it a dozen times or more. On each  
occasion the bird remained absolutely motionless for several  
seconds with its neck elongated to the utmost and held  
perfectly straight and rigid at an angle with the water  
of about  $45^\circ$ , suggesting the bow-pose of a peacock.

Somewhat ancient type. Although this pose is apparently  
taken less frequently than some of the others it appears  
to be not less elaborate & pronounced than the rest and probably  
represents the same emotion of sexual excitement. During its  
continuance the feathers of the head were sometimes fluffed out  
but often pressed down so very



Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

Whistler  
Courtship.

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Oct. 27  
(No 18)

flat that the head looked ~~stare~~ <sup>thicker</sup> than the  
neck which, because of its unusual elongation, appeared  
exceptionally slender. The bill was only slightly opened. posture.

As a rule the bird kept silent when in this posture  
but twice I saw as well as heard, it flat. In one  
of these instances it kicked up water just as it  
entered the pond, in the other this action was omitted.

When the head was raised to the bow-spring posture  
from the crouching or the wounded duck posture  
the movement was not especially rapid but when  
it was thrust directly forward and upward from  
the narrow position the action was so swift  
and abrupt that my eye could scarcely follow  
it. Although I witnessed the bow spring posture  
a number of times it was assumed less often than  
either of the two fixed postures which I am about to describe.

1909  
Feb. 27  
(No 19)

Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

Whistler  
Courtship.

Upward thrust of head and neck ending in

nostril posture or this modification of it.

Upward  
thrust &  
nostril  
posture

This was almost as common as the back thrust which it sometimes immediately followed or preceded although ordinarily it was a distinct movement (and pose) complete in itself and made directly from and back to the normal position. Sometimes the neck was elongated and straight as in the bow spirit posture, sometimes so shortened and curved that the occiput almost touched the back between the shoulders. In either case the bill was invariably well opened and pointed skyward for several seconds during which the head and neck were kept rigid. This action frequently culminated in the utterance of the piääp and the kicking up of spray but oftener than not I heard no sound and saw no water fly.



Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

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(Feb 20)

Back thrust of head and neck ending in



Folded duck - skin posture.

Whistler  
Courtskip

Back thrust

Fold skin  
posture

This was sometimes made from the most head posture but for a time directly from the normal position by a single, uninterrupted upward and backward swing of the head and neck. The movement was so swift and sudden that I often failed to follow it even when watching. I once with my attention concentrated on a bird which I felt confident was about to make it. At its termination the neck lay extended along the back and so very flat and close that it was scarcely noticeable. The head moved conspicuously enough resting, apparently on the occiput at a point anywhere between the middle of the back and the rump, with the widely jointed

Back Bay Basin,  
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Whistler  
Countryside.

Back thrust

folded skin  
position

1909.

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(No 21)

mandibles pointing straight upward, then in this  
posture the bird bore a ludicrously close resemblance  
to a duck skin prepared after the style so much  
in vogue thirty or forty years ago, that is to say,  
with the neck folded over on the back. In the skin,  
however, the head was definitely disposed being  
placed on its side to save as much vertical space  
as possible in the cabinet drawer. The living bird  
would ordinarily remain in the attitude just described  
from half a second to a full second or perhaps two  
seconds but rarely longer than that. At the close of  
this brief period of inaction the head and neck  
would swing forward, usually less rapidly and  
abruptly than when carried backward, sometimes pausing  
for a moment, when the most head position might be  
taken, but as a rule continuing to move without.

Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

Hyster  
Courtsip.

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(No 22)

Back Chamber

Frederick

decided halt until the normal position was resumed.

Rather often than not this entire appearance was

unaccompanied by any sound that reached my ears

even when the birds were near at hand; but very frequently

the passage was heard. As nearly as I could make out it was given  
only when the head

was raised above the back or shoulder and either moving

slowly forward or fixed for an instant then, perhaps

in the northeast position but it was difficult to obtain

sure about this for allowance had to be made for the

time required for sound to travel one or perhaps two

hundred yards. It is possible, therefore, that the

note was occasionally uttered when the occupant of

the bird was still resting on its back or wing

but if so I failed to satisfy myself that such

was ever the case. The best evidence as to the

precise instant when the call was emitted was afforded,



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Whistler  
Courtskip.

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I thought, by the shower of water that the bird usually (but by no means invariably) kicked into the air when calling, as nearly as I was able to determine this action either accompanies or very closely follows the production of the vocal note. It may be, however, that this interval between the two is sometimes longer than my observations have led me to suppose.

The Whistler ducks often indulged in forms of gesturing or posturing more or less nearly akin to some of those already described yet different in certain respects.

Secondary  
forms of  
courtskip

Thus they would sometimes take the bowsprit or the topmost posture without becoming rigid, <sup>in it</sup> or maintaining it for more than the fraction of a second. Frequently they would dip their bills in the water and then extend them well as far forward or upward as they could well reach, at the same time opening and closing

Dipping  
&  
swallowing?

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1909.  
Feb. 27  
(No 24)

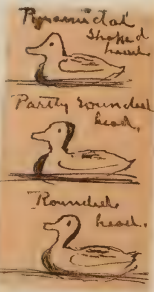
their mandibles and quivering their throats as if swallowing  
rather violently. On closely <sup>approaching</sup> one another or one of the  
females they often bobbed their heads up and down  
two or three times in quick succession. This seemed  
to be a form of polite conversation but it may have  
had a different meaning. During most of the more  
pronounced movements of the head and not infrequently  
when it was held at rest, its feathers were alternately  
raised or fluffed and depressed or flattened down, so  
that at one instant it looked almost twin, and at  
the next barely one half, its usual size. This,  
was probably done to show the plumage of  
the head to the best advantage. At least it is so.

Whistler  
Courtship

The nod

Feathers of  
head fluffed  
& flattened.

Irises  
of  
head shown



Concluded as I watched its greyish shield flash and  
glow in the sunlight and then disappear to blend out  
again with the rest of its plumage. The change in the  
adjustment of the feathers of the head resulted also in striking  
and very interesting variations in its apparent shape. Some  
of which I have tried to represent by crude sketches.

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When two or more males were showing off  
in the presence of the females they seemed to perform  
in a spirit of friendly or at least dispassionate  
rivalry. Not once during the entire morning did I  
see one of them exhibit any trace of animosity or  
unfriendliness towards another. There were no  
threatening or intimidating gestures used and no apparent  
desire to interfere with one another in any way, even  
when several males were closely grouped about the  
single female. Indeed they appeared to be almost  
wholly absorbed in their attentions to the females  
and to maintain towards one another an air of cool  
yet perfectly polite indifference. This apparent absence  
of any sexual jealousy on their part struck me  
as being very remarkable. I wonder if it continues  
to be absent later in the season when ~~the season is in progress~~  
is near at hand.

Whistle  
Courtship.

Friendly  
rivalry of  
drakes

Absence of  
jealousy  
among  
male drakes



Black Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

Whistler  
Courship.

1909.  
Feb 27  
(100 26)

The ~~more~~ elaboration of the ceremonial of courtship...

above described was seldom if ever performed this morning  
by solitary males, even when accompanied by females;  
nor did they occur when females were absent or far  
removed. Indeed I witnessed them only when at  
least two or three, often four or five, and sometimes  
as many as nine, drakes were in rather close  
association with one or more females. Often the males  
would collect about a female in a rather scattered  
group and entertain her for minutes at a time by  
their grotesque actions and peculiar low calls.

Solitary  
drakes take  
no part  
in it.

Drakes  
collect about  
females.

Whenever this happened the female remained, for the  
most part, comparatively inactive and apparently  
quite indifferent to the attentions of her showy  
admirer although she might occasionally sing  
out and obviously encourage one of them by approaching

Behavior  
of female  
when  
courted

Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

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(no 27)

him closely and bobbing his head up and down a  
few times. To this salutation he would immediately  
respond by a corresponding action before beginning his  
more elaborate performances again. Sometimes the  
female would suddenly assume the crouching position  
which would be instantly imitated by one or more  
males. Once I saw a bird which was unquestionably  
a female first nod, next crouch and then take  
the bowsprit pose. This behavior on her part  
created intense excitement among the attendant drakes  
who, to the number of at least five or six, crowded  
close about her for a moment but were quickly  
dispersed, I thought by some aggressive movement  
on her part although the whole thing occurred so  
quietly that I could not be exactly what happened  
at the end.

Whether  
courtship.

The bow  
by both  
eyes

The female  
crouches

bowsprit  
pose.

Excitement  
males.

Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

1909.  
Feb. 27  
(No. 25)

Whistling  
Courtskip.

Nuptial

Parade.

For nearly half an hour a picturesque line of  
birds, consisting of nine full plumaged males and two  
females, paraded on the glossy water well off shore  
and about two hundred yards from where I was sitting.  
They swam back and forth over a perfectly straight  
course three hundred yards or more in length.

Moving not slowly but steadily in single file, the  
females close together and ~~over~~ in the lead, the  
proud drakes following them and each other at  
intervals varying from six or ten to fifteen or  
twenty feet. Although this orderly procession  
seldom halted, even for an instant, the males were  
almost incessantly posing and flailing and kicking  
up little jets of water at their stirs, as  
they glided sedately over the calm surface of the bay.  
Apparently they performed by turns, ~~but~~ not in any



Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

1909.

Feb. 27.  
(No 29)

Whistler  
Courtship

Nuptial

Parade

regular order nor at uniform intervals but wholly  
at hop hazzard as far as sequence was concerned  
although each bird seemed to take pains not to begin  
until his immediate predecessor had nearly or quite finished.

The females swam slowly on in advance without  
once turning their heads or giving other evidence  
that they noted what was happening behind them;  
nevertheless it probably did not escape their closest  
and critical attention for Ducks, like many other  
birds, can see well to the rear when their birds are  
pointing straight ahead. I watched this scene with  
absorbing interest, because of its novelty and picturesque.  
A smaller group of Golden eyes which, for a shorter  
time, paraded in a similar manner near at hand,  
included three drakes in full nuptial dress  
and two in immature plumage. The latter were

Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

1909.  
Feb. 27  
(No 30)

Whistler  
Courtskip.

Immature  
Chicks  
Two &  
beat.

were distinguishable from the female to which they were paying attentions only by their much larger size and by the presence of a few white feathers among their scapulars and on their heads. Yet they posed & behaved to her quite as ardently as did the older chicks seeming, indeed, to have already mastered all the arts and graces of Whistler Courtskip.

When not absorbed in watching the courting birds I paid some rather close attention to those which were diving for food. As far as I could see (and they were very near me at times) their wings were always kept tightly closed or folded as long as they remained in sight. Their tails were invariably spread to the utmost possible width just as they disappeared. And a rule the downward plunge was made without much apparent effort, the bird simply immersing its

Diving  
with  
closed  
wings

Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

1909  
Feb. 27  
(Mar 31)

head and then vanishing with surprising if not  
mysterious quickness. Occasionally, however, it would  
spring upwards and forward with lowered head and  
strongly arched back, in the manner of a Grebe or  
Hergousser, sometimes showing not only the entire outline  
of the lower <sup>above the surface</sup> joints of the body, but also the whole of  
the legs and feet, just before ~~reascending~~ <sup>the water</sup> again.  
This may be done to give greater impetus to the descent  
but I observed that the same bird would sometimes  
alternate one method with the other during successive  
dives made one exactly the same sort.

Whistling  
diving

They spring  
close of the  
water



Back Bay Basin,  
Boston, Mass.

Whistler  
Courtskip

1909

March 1

9.10 to

9.45 a.m.

Cloudless and cool with rather fresh N.W. wind.

Paid a second visit to the Back Bay Basin this morning in hopes of learning something more of Whistler courtship. The birds were all about the bridge this time, off the mouth of Stony Brook, most of them well out from shore and many tottering about among the white-capped waves in mid channel. There were about the same number as on February 27<sup>th</sup> and I think they were essentially the very same lot for the proportion of males to females and of fully adult drovers to immature ones had undergone no appreciable change. Moreover I saw among them the typical female is canadensis and the aberrant female americana with yellow based bill. There was evidently little or nothing "doing" in the way of active courtship. I heard the häääp

Rock Bay Basin  
Boston, Mass.

Whistler  
Cowbird

1909  
March  
(No 2)

only six or seven times and saw but two birds  
in the act of feeding. One assumed the mast-head,  
the other the bowsprit, position. Several birds  
were seen dipping up water in their bills and  
then apparently swallowing it with upraised bills  
and necks. The harsh wind made it uncomfortable  
for us to remain long in our place. Altogether  
the results of the trip was disappointing and  
I learned nothing new.

Cambridge, Mass.

1909.  
March 16

Early morning sunny and frosty. Afternoon cloudy with muddy snow. Light S. W. wind.

Purdie & I went to Fresh Pond at 9 A. M. to see the water-fowl which have been numerous there of late. The ice went out some time ago but the pond skinned over in many places last night so that there were large areas covered with new ice sufficiently strong to support the weight of Ducks and Geese. The open water was almost perfectly calm and the birds swimming in it were nearly as conspicuous as those on the ice. From the end of Huxlock Point, whence one can look over the entire pond, we counted 84 Black Ducks, 31 Gooseanders and about a dozen Herring Gulls. No other water birds were seen during the morning. Most of the Black Ducks were standing or lying on the ice near the middle of the pond. At one



Cambridge, Mass.

1909

March 16

1st 2/

Black  
Ducks

Time all were standing and I looked them over carefully with my powerful double tube scope. Those belonging to the form rubripes could be distinguished at a glance by the color of their legs which was nearly as deep and pure as that of red beak widgeon. There were apparently only 15 of them <sup>in all</sup> & four stood together in one place, in another there were five with one typical Black Duck, in still another two pairs a few yards apart. The remaining two birds were among a much larger number of common Black Ducks. As far as the color of the legs was concerned there seemed to be no intergrading specimens for all the legs not vividly red showed no traces of that color but, on the contrary, looked dull brown or brownish. The nearest birds were within ten hundred yards, the most remote perhaps half a mile away.

Cambridge, Mass.

1909.  
Nov. 16  
(no 3)

The Goosanders avoided the ice and kept, for the most part, away from the Black Ducks in a large expanse of open water on the western side of the pond. There were 19 drakes in full plumage and 12 females or young males (not to be certainly distinguished from one another at such distances as we saw them this morning), for the first half hour or so most of the drakes were constantly engaged in courting the females. Unfortunately we were at this time on Humbolt Point and the birds fully half a mile away. But on the calm water and in the clear morning light they could be seen very distinctly through my strong glass and I do not think I was in any respect deceived as to what they did although their apparent behavior may have been due to the fact that I was too far

Goosanders  
in  
Fresh Pond

Cambridge, Mass.

1909  
March 16  
(No 4)

Courtship  
of  
Goosanders

from them to hear notes which they may have uttered.

Their behavior was in some respects not unlike that

of the White-throated ducks which I watched on February 27<sup>th</sup>

In numbers varying from three or four to ten or a dozen

they would collect about one or two females or follow

the latter from place to place, in single file, never

interfering with one another in any obvious way or

indulging in gestures which indicated animosity or

supposed jealousy. But while thus engaged they were

far more active and animated than the White-throated ducks,

swimming fast at all times and occasionally with  
indeed I doubt if ever before I have seen birds of any kind swim so swiftly  
among rapidly. The combined movements of such

a group were often too sudden and bewildering

to be easily followed or interpreted. But the general

plan of action seemed to consist of a sort of des

parade so ordered as to give the rival ducks an

Cambridge, Mass.

1909

March 16  
(No 5)

Countdown

7

Countdown

opportunity to display their respective charms of plumage and deportment to the best advantage, and in direct yet not unfriendly competition with one another. Their evolutions were, for the most part, seemingly regulated by established system or custom and some of them were strikingly beautiful. Thus eight or nine drakes, strung out in single file but so close together <sup>that</sup> the bill of <sup>every</sup> one was almost on the tail of the next, would swim past a female at top speed and then turn instantly, each bird on its own axis, as if at some given signal, before starting back in reverse order, that is with the bird which had been the last now leading. I saw this done a dozen times or more, the distance traversed in a straight line on the different occasions varying from ten to fifty yards.



Cambridge, Mass

1909.

March 16

(no 6)

Countship

8

December

When a number of drakes started after a female that was swimming away from them they usually overtook her quickly and passed her in the manner which I have just described but sometimes the chase would continue for one or two hundred yards. When overtaken she usually stopped and seemed to watch the behavior of her admirers with some interest. During their evolutions one or another of them would occasionally thrust his head straight up and to the full length of the neck but this position was never maintained for more than a fraction of a second. The distance was too great for me to make out if the bill was opened or not. I saw no other unusual movements of the head and neck, which, indeed, were carried as on ordinary occasions but perhaps

Cambridge, Mass.

1909.  
March 16  
(no 7)

Courtschip

7  
Gosseander

Somewhat higher or more erect. But I did see & very many times, jets of water or spray rise into the air at the rear of ducks which were feeding in line before the females. These were similar in every respect to those which the Whistler ducks throw up when "bleating" but the jets produced by the Gosseanders ~~are~~ to the greater height & ~~thicker~~ and apparently were somewhat ~~the~~ broader, also.

I could see them distinctly, without the aid of any glass, at a distance of half a mile. That they take an essential part of the ~~exercise~~ <sup>that</sup> of courtship and the Gosseanders, like the Whistlers, throw them up with a single vigorous kick of the feet (or feet). I have no doubt as to this. I obtained no direct evidence bearing <sup>on</sup> the latter point. After watching the Gosseanders about half an hour

Cambridge, Mass.

1909.

March 16  
[No 8]

Loonidae

from Humbolt Point we walked around the pond to the eastern side. When we got there the birds had ceased courting and were scattered about singly, or in pairs, or in small groups. Many of them were evidently engaged in fishing. I watched some of them dive dozens of times and in nearly every instance saw beyond the possibility of mistake (for I was using my glass and the distance did not exceed two hundred yards) that they half opened their wings just before they made the downward plunge. That this was the rule and not the exception on this occasion I can most positively assert. Indeed the wings were invariably separated from the sides and sometimes rather widely so, whenever I saw them plainly just as the bird disappeared.

Cambridge, Mass.

1909  
March 16  
(No 9)

One pair of Gosswander nearer us than with  
any of the others and at a distance of perhaps  
150 yards acted for a time in a singular manner.  
At first I noticed only the drake, a fine big fellow  
with snowy white sides and bottle green head. He  
was swimming slowly close about an inconspicuous  
object that looked like a piece of bark or driftwood.  
On scrutinizing it closely, however, I soon made  
out that it was a female Gosswander floating  
perfectly motionless and so deeply immersed that  
only the hair of her back showed above the  
surface. "A dead bird without doubt," I said  
to my companion. For at least three minutes she  
remained thus and  
the drake continued to circle around her for some  
time pushing at her, occasionally, very gently.  
Then, of a sudden, the water was violently

Gosswander

Singular  
behavior  
of mated  
pair.



Cambridge, Mass.

1909.

March 16  
(No 10)

Gossander

agitated and a brown-crested head, followed by a grayish body, came into full view as the female Gossander sprang almost close of the surface by a single vigorous effort. After this she swam about silently by the side of her mate as long as I had the pair in view.

I am wholly at a loss to account for this singular incident. When the female was present I looked repeatedly & carefully for her head without detecting any trace of it. I am inclined to believe that it was held under water most if not all of the time. I heard no vocal notes given by any of the Gossanders to-day.

One of the Herring Gulls, standing on the ice, was eating what looked like a fish of about half a pound in weight. It took him exactly a minute to dispose of all of it. It looked fatty and dark-colored as if eaten or less decomposed.

Herring  
Gull  
and fish  
in fresh  
food

Cambridge, Mass.

1909  
March 17

Clear and cool with light west wind.

Visit  
Fresh Pond

Purdie and I went again to Fresh Pond this morning alighting from our car at the farther bridge and walking thence along the park driveway to the western shore. The ice was all gone, the water ruffled everywhere by wind. There were more Gulls (about 60) than yesterday but fewer Ducks. We counted 60 Black Ducks and 19 Gosswanders. Of the latter 11 were males in full plumage and 8 birds in female dress. They were a good way off on the north side of the pond and I saw them do nothing that indicated courtship.

Gulls

Black Ducks  
Gosswanders

Among the Black Ducks was a fine adult male Baldpate (Mareca americana) in full plumage, apparently, I saw him in the water, about 300 yards away, and twice on wing, above the

Bald Pat

Fresh Pond

Cambridge, Mass.

1989

March 17  
(no 2)

Some distance, making out plainly most of the characteristics of color and moult. His crown looked almost snow white when he was in the water & the moment I saw it I knew the bird was a Kinglet. He is probably the same Goldfinch double that Mr. H. W. Wright and others have seen at intervals through the past winter in Jamaica Pond, Chestnut Hill Reservoir & other stretches of water (including Back Bay Basin) near Boston & Cambridge (See records of Forest and). He kept company with Black Ducks, both when swimming & flying, to-day.

At Fresh Pond I heard this morning a Meadow Lark singing, a Field Sparrow and several Redwings uttering the quack-ee-ee in chorus.

No Song Sparrows heard to-day but one Song yesterday.

Mareca  
americana

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 18.

Brilliantly clear with raging N. W. wind.  $18^{\circ}$  at sundown. Weather a harsh day with no comfort to be had save in very sheltered places.

Came to Concord by an early train this morning to spend Return  
to  
two or three weeks at the farm. There is no snow in roads Concord  
or fields but plenty of it still in dense woods, especially  
under pines. River open and uncommonly low for this season  
although over the meadows in places.

Took short walk in early afternoon (1-3 P.M.).  
visiting Pulpit Rock woods, Birch Field, Ritchie place,  
Barrett Run and Berry Pasture. Saw Redpolls,  
Chickadees (2 solitary birds) Robins (7 in Harris pasture) Robins.  
Crows (3 or 4) & what may have been a Gos. Hawk. The only  
bird heard singing was one of the Chickadees.  
Shot two Rabbits from their forms, stumbling on Rabbits  
them quite by chance. One was in Birch Field, the  
other in the Barrett Run, a favorite haunt of theirs.



Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 18

(No 2.)

Found a large flock of Redpolls in Birch Field.

Large flock

of  
Redpolls

They flew up from the ground and alighted in low trees where I counted 80. There were still others in fairs which I heard but could not see. They were so restless that I was unable to inspect many of them closely, but I noticed at least 8 or 10 sooty-breasted males, three of them sitting close together on the same branch. They must have stripped the birches of their seeds during the winter for I could detect no "cones" on any of them. These to-day although they were thickly hung with them last winter. The Redpolls ~~also~~ apparently ~~decreased~~ now reduced to gleaning the fallen and scattered seeds for they returned to the ground beneath the birches as soon as they recovered from their alarm at my intrusion. Most of them chose open mossy or grassy places but a dozen or more descended into a dense

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 18  
(no 3)

Thicket of blackberry bushes intermingled with bushy Redpolls  
young white pine where the ground was covered deep with feeding on  
fallen leaves, chiefly those of the gray birches that rose above ground in  
the lesser growths. On approaching these birds closely dense  
(within 20 feet) I was surprised to find that they were thicket  
scattering the leaves about by picking them up in their flinging  
bills and flinging them rather violently to right & left - leaves about  
and also by "scratching", much after the manner of & scratching  
Tree Sparrows, that is by first giving a bounding hop like  
forward and then kicking the leaf backward with both Tree Spar-  
feet just as they alighted on it. Of this there can now  
be absolutely no doubt for I saw it unmistakably  
dozens of times & for the first time in my life.

As the birds were all collected together within the  
space of a square yard or less they made the leaves  
fly in showers & saw upward the ground where they

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 18  
(no 4)

appeared to find plenty of food which, I inferred, must be bird seeds, as I did not see them feeding anywhere except under birches.

Redpolls

During most of the time I was watching this flock of Redpolls their calls came to my ears almost

Call notes

of

Redpoll

incessantly but I did not hear any of them sing. [On the morning of March 20 I heard the first song notes near at hand. It was a smooth, sweet trill - twacececece - pitched high & all in one key, I think.]

Song.

The flight call was used oftenest, even when the birds were perched. It is rather hard or woody, or like the sound of snow pellets striking against our window; yet it is subject to soft and rather sweet modulations.

I should write it tch-tch or tch-tch-tch.

Sometimes there is but one syllable - tch. A much sweeter note, less often heard and usually given when the bird is perched in a tree top, is rae-e, very like the may be of our Goldfinch. This call has given ~~with~~ a rising inflection & is very pleasing in quality.

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 18

(1905)

Late this afternoon, as I was sitting in my

House

Sparrows.

chamber, I heard a sudden clamor of English Sparrow voices and looking out the front window I saw a large flock of the obnoxious birds sitting in clusters in the forget-me-not bushes by the well. It did not occur to me to count them but there could not have been less than thirty or forty. I seldom see so many together here, even in late autumn. They have been multiplying fast these last few years, no doubt because of the increasing number and dispersion along this road, of large chicken yards. I had difficulty in keeping them out of my bird houses last spring and only succeeded in doing so by shooting them systematically. If I remember rightly I killed seven or eight in May and June 1908 and nearly as many in 1907. They are most troublesome on the Rabbit Island.



Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 18,

no 6

I had a talk with N. A. Davis this morning about Pheasants. He tells me that they have multiplied exceedingly during the past two years and that they are now numerous almost everywhere throughout the more eastern parts of Concord especially in the open farming country bordering on Bedford Street & the Virgin Road.

Pung-suck  
Pheasants.

Previous to 1908 he seldom saw or heard of them on the north and west side of Concord River but a large covey spent last autumn on the Sewall place at the western base of Punkolawick Hill and others were reported to him as frequenting some of the neighboring farms. He saw a pair only a few days ago near the Manse. He has noticed that wherever Pheasants become numerous Partridges & he thinks Quail, also, disappear.

All this agrees perfectly with my own observations although

I have seen few Pheasants as yet on this side of the river & none at the farm where, however, they have been seen by my men.

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 19

Sunny but hazy and partly cloudy. Light W. winds. Early morning cold (24°). Rather warm at noon.

Took a morning walk (8-10 a.m.) to Ball's Hill, going by way of Hens pasture & Holden's Hill, returning over Pine Ridge and past Benson's. Birds scarce and silent for the most part. The only ones heard singing were a Chickadee, two Song Sparrows, and four Redwings. It is evident that only the vanguard of the migratory flight of Robins and Song Sparrows has reached here as yet.

Morning  
walk.

The same is true of the flocks of robins I saw only one bird.

Started a Partridge on Pine Ridge and a Carolina Dove from a sandy flat in Hens' pasture. Saw three Blue Jays and heard as many more. No Bluebirds seen or heard. A few Crows seen, perhaps six or seven.

Car. Dove

As I was standing near the cabin a Rabbit started

Rabbit

by Leary in the swamp behind Ball's Hill corner looking along the river path to seek the usual refuge in the wood shed. So very nervously follows him there but he did not on this occasion.

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 19.  
(No 2)

A flock of about 25 Goldfinches in gray birches included a few Redpolls. I not only heard their calls but saw three or four of them distinctly. None of the Goldfinches showed any bright yellow but one of the males sang in rather subdued tones a few times.

Goldfinches

Redpolls  
intermingled  
in our flocks.

A pair of Chickadees at Balls Hill were looking for a nesting site, apparently, and examining all sorts of crevices most of which were so obviously unsuited to their purpose that I wondered why they should waste time inspecting them. One bird, the ♂ no doubt, whistled the phoebe note and also called twee-dee-dee at frequent intervals. This call is very unlike the chee-a-dee-dee.

Notes of  
Chickadees

There were four Red-wings in full song in the bottom bushes opposite Balls Hill. They sang by turns, never interrupting one another. Each bird used always the same notes. One bird said something like oh-erk-er-lee, one oak-er-lee and two simply gwer-lee (distinctly only two syllables). Song of Red wings

Blackbirds

Concord, Mass.

1909  
March 14  
(No 3)

The Red-shouldered Hawks are back in their old haunts at Holden's Hill. As I approached the nest in the tall chestnut, in which they reared a brood of young last year and one in 1907, the males flew from a branch within a few yards of the nest. He was joined by the female, who came from the trees beyond, when both birds soared about over the woods keeping at a distance but screaming almost incessantly. I know of no wilder sound than that of their loud, ringing voices. There were no challenges or pellets under the nest. It looked rather more trim and shapely than when I left here last autumn but I am not sure that it has been really changed in this way.

Red Shouldered  
Hawks  
Back at  
Holden's Hill



Concord, Mass.

1909

March 19

(No 4)

Spent afternoon in Birch Field. Where the cart path <sup>Ruffed Grouse</sup>  
leaves it to enter the woods lying between it and the farm <sup>kill'd &</sup>  
(about 4 P.M.) <sup>large Hare</sup>  
I found, a great quantity of Partridge feathers, apparently  
nearly if not quite all that had belonged to a fine old  
gray-tailed, black-ruffed cock perhaps the one that has  
drummed for so many years on the wall in Barrett Run.  
He had evidently been seized among some dense young  
pines bordering the east side of the path. Here I found  
his ruffs and ~~twenty~~ rectrices besides many of the  
body feathers. Another large pile of feathers, chiefly  
from his sides & breast, lay in the middle of the  
path and among these were his entrails which seemed  
to be entire although somewhat bruised and matted together.  
The upper part of his skull & a small fragment of bone  
lay on the western edge of the path with his primaries  
secondaries and various other feathers. Here, apparently,

Couesville, Mass.

1909  
March 19  
(no 5)

the Bird of prey, which quite evidently had been the murderer, had gorged himself with the flesh of his victim. It may have been either during or just after his repast that he voided his chalky white excrement. I found no less than six splashes of it on the dry leaves, each of them almost continuous for a foot or more and two inches broad in places. This indicated that Hawk or Owl of the largest size as did also the fact that the skull had been cut through in several places (across the frontal bone and both orbital bones) as cleanly as if with some powerful steel implement. Nothing short of a Goshawk or a Great Horned Owl could well have done such work. Partridges never roost (except under snow) in places such as that where this bird had been seized and Owls catch them, as far as I have observed, only when they are roosting in trees.

Ruffed Grouse  
kindly  
shown by  
Large Hawk

Bowdoin, Mass

1909.  
March 19  
(No 6)

Hence I am inclined, after thinking the matter over  
carefully, as I was at first shocked, to attribute the  
deed to a Goshawk. It must have been committed  
within twenty-four hours for the feathers had not been  
blown about as they would have been by the raging wind  
that blew most of yesterday nor had the fragments of  
flesh adhering to the skull become too dry to yield a  
few drops of blood when I squeezed them tightly. The  
Hawk's experiment was almost but not quite dry.  
I judged that it had been exposed to the sun and  
wind not over six or seven hours. All this considered  
inclines me to believe that the Partridge was killed  
about nine or ten o'clock this forenoon. I neglected to  
say that every one of the feathers I examined had been picked

Ruffed Grouse  
killed &  
eaten by  
large Hawk

out & not bitten off. I found no soft flesh or bony  
fragments besides those already mentioned. Yesterday forenoon I  
saw a very large Hawk that looked like a Goshawk. I noticed especially  
its long tail as it flew over the field in front of my house. Two Goshawks  
have been reported to see this last morning, however.

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 21

Brilliantly clear with gusts of cold N. W. wind alternating with prolonged periods of dead calm. A crisp, bracing morning with ground hard frozen. Warm with windy roads later in day.

Leaving the house with "Lary" at 9 a. m. I ascended Mrs. Honor's pasture to Holden's Hill and walked thence along the river path to the cabin where I spent nearly half an hour. Thence I went to Davis' Hill and across the swamp into Prescott's pine woods where I wandered about for some time. As I was passing through Birch Field on my way home, about eleven o'clock, I met Mr. & Mrs. Edward W. Emerson. They had come down for a walk in the woods with me so I turned back & we strolled about Birch Field and the woods to the south of it until half past twelve when they left me (at the house) to drive back to Concord. Thus I was out of doors the whole forenoon. Saw nothing of especial interest save a drab Golden-eye

Morning  
walk to  
Baker's  
Davis' Hill



Concord, Mass.

1909

March 21  
(no 2)

flying down river past Davis Hill. It is evident that small as well as large, birds are unusually keen for this season and that of such species as the Robin, Song Sparrows, Juncos, Tree Sparrows, Red wing and Rusty Blackbird only a very few former individuals have as yet arrived. Even Blackbirds are very few in number (I heard only one to-day but he was singing divinely, near the house, about noon).

This is all the more remarkable & indeed mysterious in view of the fact that there is little or no snow (and there has been none for some a week) except in shaded places in the woods. The nights are perhaps exceptionally cold & this may be holding back the birds. I heard only one Song Sparrow all the morning. Saw a few Tree Sparrows (four or five) in bushes near the river meadow, behind Ball's Hill.

Scarcity  
of  
early spring  
birds.

Concord, Mass.

1909

March 21

(No 3)

The country is still flooded with Redpolls. I saw Abundances  
this morning one flock of fully fifty and another of about <sup>of</sup> ~~seven~~ Redpolls  
twenty-five, on wing and one little company of seven or  
eight (in Black Field) and a solitary bird (at Bass Hill) <sup>a</sup> solitary  
Redpoll feeding on the ground under bushes. To say that the males  
in the morning flocks were in full song fails to do  
justice to the fact. Both flocks passed directly over  
me and as they did as it seemed as if every bird  
in each was singing at once. Their sweeeeee notes  
mingled together in an unbroken and perfectly uniform  
volume of sound which reminded me of the flying  
sounds of Cuckoos although it was different in quality  
and indeed very sweet & pleasing. I heard it without  
cessation as long as the birds were within earshot.  
They uttered no other notes except their ordinary flight  
calls and these were almost drowned by the song notes.

Chorus  
singing of  
Redpolls  
which on  
wing

Concord, Mass.

1909

March 21  
(no 4)

Mrs. E. W. Emerson told me an interesting and most surprising story about some Tree Sparrows. Six of them settled for the past winter near her house coming to it every day for the seeds she put out for them. As they were eating these one morning a bird was suddenly attacked by another, apparently without provocation, and pecked so severely about the head and neck that it was speedily & completely disabled. Mrs. Emerson saw all this with her own eyes. She knows Tree Sparrows well and is certain that one of them was the aggressor. Mrs. Emerson went out and picked up the injured bird. After scrippily seeing that it could not recover he killed it. He tells me that the most serious wound it received was in the cervical vertebrae near the base of the skull. The other five birds were seen through the winter.

Tree Sparrows  
attacked &  
mortally  
wounded  
by another  
bird of the  
same species

Concord, Mass.

1909.  
March 21  
(No 5)

A Robin in front of the house was singing  
setts voce, about noon, in a bushy back the berries  
of which it ate greedily during intervals of silence.

Robin  
Singing  
setts voce  
& feeding  
on berries

This is the first Robin song I have heard. The birds  
are few in numbers & chiefly confined to pasture lands.

A Cotton-Tail Rabbit, started by Lorry this forenoon,  
took a nearly straight course across Birch & Alder,  
rearing at very unusual speed & alternately appearing  
and disappearing among the scattered clusters of trees.

Rabbit  
running at  
unusual  
speed.

Edmund W. Emerson, who was with me, said that

when it crossed an opening it looked to him like

a dark line several yards in length and <sup>his</sup> that eye

utterly failed to record it as the small, swiftly moving

object whence his brain assured him it must be. This

was exactly the impression it made on the other

passed us at a distance of about 100 yards.



Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 22.

The roughest kind of a rough March day brilliantly Harsh  
clear but cold with a raging & possibly icy N.W. wind. weather.  
Ther. 20° at sunrise. The ground frozen hard all day.

Practically all of the few early spring birds now here  
must have sought shelter in secluded places for I saw  
nothing but down Robins (collected together on the sunny hill  
of the woods at the Pitkin place). The only bird I heard  
was a Junco singing the simple tune in our orchard. I did not,  
however, meet with eight Juncos feeding on the ground in  
the chicken yard at the Bungalow. I was in Bird's Field  
for nearly three hours without noting a single bird of any kind,  
a most unusual affair.

Birds  
vanish.

Passing through the wood path just below the peach  
orchard this afternoon I found the tail of a large Gray  
Squirrel. It could not have been there yesterday noon  
when the Emersons & I came home that way for it  
was in the very middle of the path, in an open  
place, and too conspicuous to be overlooked. Moreover  
it was perfectly flexible & the thick end was still  
wet with fresh blood. Apparently it had been cut  
off or rather bitten off, close to the Squirrel's body  
but by whom? And what had become of the body  
of the Squirrel. I suspect a Fox had something  
to do with the matter but this is pure assumption,  
unsupported by any evidence, for I found no tracks  
or other signs. The ground was too hard frozen to  
register them. Thus the affair is quite mysterious &  
likely to remain so, I fear.

Another  
woodland  
tragedy.

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 23

Another cold, rough, windy day. It seemed quite as raw as yesterday but the temperature was very higher (28° min 44° max). The sky was absolutely cloudless and the air remarkably clear, from sunrise to sunset.

Birds were somewhat more in evidence than yesterday yet very scarce and for the most part silent with no evidence of any migratory movement from the South.

About 9 o'clock this morning I found a pair of White-bellied Nuthatches in the Bassett Run. They seemed to be interested in a small, round, knot-hole in a wild apple tree by the hole. The ♂ peeped into it a number of times and the ♀ entered it once, remaining inside for at least half-a-minute. These, no doubt, are the birds that have bred on the Farm every year since I have owned it. I have never actually found their nest although I have often seen them looking into holes before and twice taking building material into them but afterwards the hole was abandoned for some insensible reason before the eggs were laid.

Pair of  
White-bellied  
Nuthatches  
inspecting  
hole for  
nest!

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 23

(No 2/)

When I reached the Retchin place about 9 o'clock this morning I was surprised to see a Crow Blackbird flying across the large open field. It alighted among some maples on the edge of the woods where, as I soon found, it had joined seven other birds of the same species. There were five males and two females. As I approached them they flew first into an apple tree and next into the grove of red pines where they remained for some time, the males uttering their Chattering notes occasionally. I rarely see a flock of these Blackbirds here, especially in spring.

Chickadees were singing rather freely this morning. I heard no less than ten at one time, in Birch Field, a rather unusual number. There were at least two others in the Near Dry Hills closely to sheltered woods, this rough weather.

Flock of  
Bronzed  
Grackles  
at  
Retchin place

3 Chickadees  
singing  
phoebe  
at same  
time, near  
together.

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 24

Brilliantly clear with light W. wind through forenoon. Clouds gathered in late afternoon and wind changed to N.E. at sunset. Warm in middle of day (50°) but cold last night (26°). Saw two *J. alba* Butterflies. The bees that live in the boxes of the old farm house were out in myriads & buzzing noisily about the entrance hole.

A Flicker was shouting near the house at sunset and a Robin in full song just before sunset.

Birds heard singing

Heard Bluebirds singing at intervals through the forenoon. No Song Sparrows heard but one seen at Rietveld's place.

Gilbert told me yesterday that House Sparrows were roosting in front of our Bungalow. I went there this evening, about sunset, taking my 20g. gun. The Sparrows were making a great chattering & coting in the bushy young pines. I went through them from end to

Sparrows roosting there.

end shaking the trees & shouting. Not a Sparrow could I see or drive out although I heard many of them flutter close to me. I then went outside & then in places where all the birds dashed out & alighted in bushes there where I killed four in three shots. Ground under pines white with droppings.



Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 25

Heavy north-east storm with a fresh gale of wind and floods of rain. Towards evening, when the wind was blowing about the hardest, I heard several trees fall in the woods. One a heavy, dead white pine came crashing down within 30 yards of me striking the face of a hollow ledge and breaking into fragments.

North-east  
storm

A small flight of birds apparently arrived from the south during the night. About 8 o'clock this evening I heard a Song Sparrow in full song near the house and saw at least 25-juncos behind it, flitting through the branches of the apple tree and chasing one another with wide-spread tails and crisp twittering notes.

Small flight  
of Sparrows

Juncos in  
orchard

The males were singing their low flat notes but I did not hear any of the liquid sounds usually interspersed in the song at this season.

Just before sunset a flock of about 25-30 Common Blackbirds passed over, flying low over our berry pasture towards the north-east in the teeth of the furious gale blowing at that time. It seemed so unexpected that they could make head way against so violent a wind but it did not seem to give them much trouble except once when they all stooped nearly to the ground, evidently to escape the force of a heavy blast.

Brownish  
Blackbirds in  
gale of  
wind

Concord, Mass.

1909

March 25  
(no 2)

Henry P. Richardson brought me the dried corpse of a House Sparrow impaled on a twig of an apple tree fully  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in thickness which is driven down behind the sternum, between the forks of the wish bone. He found it last winter in an alder swamp near Stearnsbury Hill, Concord. Without doubt it must have been killed and transfigured by a Shrike. I have never <sup>before</sup> known a Shrike to make use of so stout a skewer, however.

Sparrow  
impaled  
by Shrike

H. P. Richardson tells me has never seen a living Otter, nor the tracks of one, in Concord but that in the early 70's he examined a freshly killed one that Sam Harris (or "Leadropful Harris", as he was facetiously called because he was crippled & used his hands in crawling about) took in the Sudbury River somewhere not far below Heath's Bridge. Harris was in his boat (he was an inveterate fisherman

Otter  
killed in  
Sudbury  
River  
"about 1870"

Concord, Mass.

1909

March 25  
(no 3/)

and must 2d hunter as I well remember  
for I often used to meet & talk with him on the  
river in the 70's) fishing for minnows for bait  
with a short, heavy, oak whip stock which he  
was using as a rod. The Otter, coming up from  
a dive, broke the surface of the water so  
near him that he caught it by the tail just  
as it was disappearing again and quickly  
killed it with his whip stock by a few blows  
on the head. At least this is Richardson's story.

He says Ned Neely skinned the animal and  
will probably be able to tell me all about  
it. Richardson does not remember ever hearing  
of the one I reported in my "Sever" article as  
killed in winter in deep snow in New Deer Corner

but John Neely was familiar with the story  
at the time it was current in Concord & said it to me a few weeks ago.

Concord, Mass

1784  
March 26

A gray day with occasional brief gleams of sunshine.  
Cool but not frosty, with fresh west wind

Took a walk about the farm just after breakfast,  
going through Puffer's back woods & beyond. Not a bird song of  
any kind heard. Saw (2) Chickadees in Birch Field. Redpolls  
loosed overhead on two different occasions. Silvertails eight  
times near the well across the road. A Song Sparrow spent  
most of morning in the lilac bushes behind the barn & a ♀  
Downy came there to feast on the sweet which she has visited  
for the past two days but which thus far has attracted no  
other birds. Richardson & his gypsy man saw a flock  
of about 20 Geese fly over the farm at 9 a.m. when I was  
in the barn.

I went to Ball's Hill in mid afternoon via Birch Field,  
Bensons & Pine Ridge returning via Holden Hill & Horse's Pasture.  
A more nearly birdless walk is not often to be had at this  
season. I saw (2) Chickadees, 1 Kinglet & 1 Bluebird & heard  
Redpolls & Red-winged Blackbirds once. The country seemed  
very dreary & lifeless yet it was not cold nor very windy.

The Golden-crowned Kinglet at Ball's Hill was flitting  
about among lower bolls apparently quite alone. At short  
intervals it gave the usual tt (or ch't) tree-tree quickly  
followed by tree-zee-zee. One must be very near to hear  
the low, hisping prefix to the first pair of tree's. I am not  
sure it is given always. I took down the notes above  
entirely on the spur. They too, vary in number & sequence  
if I remember rightly but they were always the same  
with this bird to-day.

Birds Scarce  
or Silent.

Call notes  
of  
Golden-crowned  
Kinglet.



Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 27

Although the air was chilly and the ground frozen hard at sunrise the day turned out delightfully warm with bright sunshine and light S. W. to S. E. breezes. Clouds gathered before sunrise & there was a dash of rain later.

A Robin, a Song Sparrow and a Thrasher were singing near the house at sunrise. Later I heard Chickadees & a Bluebird or two. About 4 P. M. a Fox Sparrow began singing gloriously in the forget-me-not bushes in front of the house. Shortly after this he came on the balcony under the parlor windows where he spent nearly half an hour eating hemp seed that we kept there. He seemed to be a solitary bird and he must have come more or less for this afternoon for I was out of doors the entire forenoon, near the house, and should certainly have seen or heard him had he been here then.

Birds  
singing  
A  
single  
Fox Sparrow  
arrives at  
the farm.

While in the orchard this afternoon I saw a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks pass overhead at an immense height (at least 1000 ft.). They were moving N. W. in a perfectly straight course, on a level plane, one following in the wake of the other at a distance of about 100 yards, the male leading the way. Their wings were set and strongly bowed as long as I had the birds in sight, yet they glided on without effort and seemingly without inclining downward in the least, for a distance of fully a mile, progressing very slowly, however. I have often seen large Hawks do this very thing before & to my mind it the most majestic & impressive of their many different forms of flight. The wings look broader than at other times & there is something unusual & peculiar in the way they are held.

Pair of  
Red-shouldered  
Hawks  
gliding at  
great height

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 27

(no 2)

About ten minutes after the Red-shouldered Hawks

God knows!

passed over me another Hawk, of still greater size, apparently, followed them flying at about the same height in nearly the same direction and in a precisely similar manner. It was shaped like a Cooper's Hawk and when I first noticed it at a distance, advancing from the eastward, I took it for a female of that species. But when it came overhead I saw that it was much too large for a Cooper's. Its wings looked short and broad, its body bulky, its tail very long. The general coloring of the under parts was apparently grayish. I think the bird must have been a female Goshawk. I did not once see it beat its wings and the course it followed was not quite straight and just as it was passing out of sight it made a sudden twist to the right, followed by one to the left. There was little or no sound at the time.

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 28

Forenoon chilly with N.E. wind and heavy rain changing at times to sleet. Afternoon cloudy & gloomy. Wind N.W. and narrow strip of blue sky showing along western horizon at sunset.

There were three Fox Sparrows at the seed bed behind the house to day as against one yesterday but the numbers had decreased one half for there were only four five to-day in place of the ten that we had yesterday. Song Sparrows had increased slightly in numbers for I heard two singing on the fence and saw another at Mr. Howes.

Robins seem to have arrived in large numbers some Robins arrive in time during to-day. When I got to Mr. Howes at 4.30 P.M. for he told me this had been fully fed by feeding on his lawn only a few minutes before. As I walked back after sunset (6.10-6.30) I heard them singing & calling in every direction far and near. Two birds were in full song, the others had more or less hoarse voices as is common when they first come. I saw a number fly past, low down, as they crossed the road into our berry pasture where they seemed to be going to roost in the blueberry bushes.

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 28

(No 2.)

I was returning from Mr. Houns shortly after  
sunset this evening and had reached the Ralston house when  
I looked intently ahead at the group of big-boxed poplars  
in the corner of our berry pasture just over the wall from  
the roadside hoping vaguely that I might see a Partridge there.  
Sure enough there was one, easily to be mistaken at that  
distance for the Oriole or Cerylella nest that might have  
been but was not, there. I passed her within fifteen yards  
and kept on up the road to a distance of sixty yards  
before stopping. All this while and for five minutes  
longer she remained rigid & motionless her body  
crest her neck stretched up & looking Heaven thicker  
than one's finger, her crest erect with its feathers widely  
parted. At length she abandoned her stoniness  
rose and hopping up to a perch just above where  
she had been sitting began building. During the

Her Partridge  
"building"  
in poplar.



Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 28  
(No 3)

next ten minutes she did not once shift her  
feet but the inclination of her body changed  
from time to time, varying from horizontal or crouching to  
nearly erect, and her head was rarely still for more  
than an instant. Indeed she kept it in rapid and  
almost constant motion as she docted it out on every  
side and sometimes upward, picking off and swallowing  
(much as a hungry domestic cat does)

the poplar buds. At least this is what I knew

she must be doing although I could not see the buds  
at that distance, of course. My view of the bird (a small  
female) was obscured only (and but slightly) by the  
long feathery catkins with which the tree was thickly  
hung but as I had her silhouetted against the

bright light in the west I could trace her outlines &  
her movements accurately enough. It was growing dark  
(at 6.30) when she left her perch (a slender branch 20 ft. above  
the ground near the top of the tree) and whirled (no sound of  
wings, however) across the road in the red pine grove where I  
heard her settle within a branch on the ground with a loud swoosh.  
(This record should be compared with that made here in 1897 several years  
ago of a ♀ Parus doing similar work in the tree)

Hen Partridge  
feeding in  
poplar.

Concord, Mass.

1909

March 29

A wild March day, sunny for the most part but with cloud masses continually driving across the sky before the strong, cold N. W. winds.

Birds not noted before this spring:— Hermit Thrush, Cow-bird, Arreos  
Red-bellied Nuthatch.

I found the Hermit, a town, silent bird, among some dense, young white pines near the Bunker Spring. When I first noticed it it was perched on a low branch within twenty feet of me throwing up its tail. It had probably flown up from the ground a second or two before.

An early  
Hermit.

The Nuthatch was in some tall pines near Poplar Road. I heard it utter the prolonged nasal whining several times. But did not see it.

Sitta  
carolinensis

The Cow-bird was heard about 9 a.m. It gave the clear, three-syllabled whistling flight call which is, I think, peculiar to the male and by him used only in spring & early summer.

First  
Cow-bird

About 9.30 I heard the throaty calls of Cow Blackbirds Big flock and looking up saw a large flock of these birds flying over our orchard at an unusual height, steering N. W. and evidently migrating to some distant place. I counted the members of the flock roughly and got just 70 but this figure was only an approximation. Browned Grackles  
migrating  
at  
9.30 a.m.

I have no question that these Blackbirds were migrating for our local birds of this species never fly at any such height (near 1000 ft, I estimated it).

Concord, Mass.

1909

March 30

Another day of bright, warm sunshine and strong, cold N. W. wind. Sky half filled at times with dark masses of drifting clouds.

Noted for first time this Spring: - Horned Lark - its call Amooie. note heard distinctly near the house. The bird (I heard but one, seemed to be passing over directly over our bed. I could not see it.

There was a marked & indeed very considerable increase in the numbers of juncos, Fox Sparrows and Red-wings about our place (I did not go far away from the house) to-day but Robins & Song Sparrows continue fewer and there are fewer Bluebirds than usual.

There were seven Fox Sparrows at the seed bed under the dining room windows. They sang freely to-day for the first time. Through the forenoon their glorious voices were almost constantly in my ears.

Early in the afternoon I encountered a flock of fully 50 juncos in our berry pasture. As I walked towards the house they filled on ahead chasing one another through the trees & bushes with wide-spread tails, showing an white outer sections conspicuously. The males were singing incessantly using the varied notes common at this season. Thus I drove the flock quite to the house when they all crowded about our seed bed for a while, greedily exhorting all the food we had placed there.

Later in the afternoon a flock of 15 male Red-wings settled in a large oak at the rear of the house & sang there for ten minutes or more, just as I used to hear them in Cambridge when a boy -

Louise, Mrs.

1909

March 30

(no 2)

One of my Bird Boxes has been occupied every season by Bluebirds ever since it was first put up, eight or ten years ago, in a solitary apple tree in the field across the road. I usually clear it out every autumn but this has been neglected for the past two years. As James was pruning the tree to-day I asked him to do it. On opening the box he said it contained "a new nest full of eggs." Before I could stop him he had taken out literally a hand full of them. I made him put them back and bring them down in the nest. It looked perfectly new and fresh and contained no less than eleven eggs, two broken by his clumsy handling. These, with the nine whole ones, were covered with fly specks & the contents coagulated or dried & in one clump. Evidently they

Remarkable  
clutch? of  
Bluebirds  
eggs.

had all been laid last year. An older nest (that of 1907 no doubt), under the other, held two unhatched but badly stained & broken eggs. To add to the mystery of this discovery a pair of Bluebirds were flying close about & looking as all the time we were at the box. After we had left it, taking both nests & all the eggs, the ♀ alighted at the hole & came in, then flew away.



Concord, Mass.

1909

March 31

March "goes out like a lion" this time - with a roaring E. W. wind, less harsh than that of yesterday, however. Sky absolutely cloudless from morning to night and an exquisite tender blue. Air clear as crystal. Altogether a rarely beautiful day and by no means an unenjoyable one. The thermometer registered  $32^{\circ}$  as the lowest temperature last night and  $53^{\circ}$  as the highest to-day.

Weather

Noted for first time this year: - Phoebe - one singing near the cabin at Ball's Hill. Wood Frogs - about half a dozen croaking at 4 P.M. in the swampy pool at the foot of the hill below our orchard, where I usually hear them earlier than elsewhere and nearly always about this same time of day - when the evening sun strikes full upon the little pond.

First Phoebe

First Wood Frogs.

To-day perhaps marked the flood tide of the northward migration of Fox Sparrows, Junco and Song Sparrows. There were no less than 20 birds of the first named species at our seed bed this afternoon but I found none elsewhere on the place nor at Ball's Hill. Of Junco we had seen half a dozen about the house but I met with an immense flock in the fields near Barnard's, fully one I should say.

Rather heavy migration of Song Sparrows, Fox Sparrows & Junco.

Song Sparrows were singing every where especially near the river and in Pine Park. I must have seen & heard twenty or more. It is true that the estimated numbers (corrected in the case of the Fox Sparrows) are not large for any of these three birds but I have an idea that they may not be exceeded in my experience here this Spring for the season if a kind unfavorable for flights of the entire flock.

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March 31

(No 2)

The large flock of Robins noted on the 28<sup>th</sup> must have passed on northward for the birds have been even scarcer since then than they were before. I saw only one to-day but one (perhaps the same) was singing near the house at sundown. It is evident that our local birds have not yet come in any numbers.

Robins.

Most of the Redpolls seem to have left us. I had not noted any for several days previous to this when I saw but one - a handsome rusty-breasted male feeding on the ground under grey birches on Ross' Hill.

Solitary  
Redpoll.

The singing of birds about the house when I awoke just before sunrise this morning was truly delightful. There has, indeed, been nothing to equal it before this spring. Within the space of a few minutes I heard Bluebirds, a Robin, two or three Song Sparrows, a Flicker and numerous Fox Sparrows and Juncos. What I took to be a Dory was drumming in one of the elms. There were Chickadees, also, giving their clear Pheee calls in several directions and long screaming and cawing along the borders of the woods. The Fox Sparrows sang at intervals through the entire day, as did the Juncos & Song Sparrows, also.

Early morning  
singing

I found about a dozen J. Alba Butterflies in the loft over the wood shed, fullwing against the closed window, and let them all out into the sunshine when they flew about one door yard with evident enjoyment. One I found in a bird box hung up in the shed.

Butterflies.

Concord, Mass

1909.

April 1

Still another day of absolutely cloudless skies, crystal clear air and rushing N. W. wind. A little colder than yesterday. Ther. fell to 29° last night & rose to 50° to-day.

Weather

Noted for first time this Spring - Cooper's Hawk (CP)

I doubt if any small birds arrived from the South or left for the North, last night. I saw rather fewer than yesterday but then I covered but ground to-day. The matter up of the mixed flock of Sparrows at our bird bed or tree of hives remained about the same there being to-day 18 Fox Sparrows, 5 or 6 Junco and 3 Song Sparrows. The Fox Sparrows were singing gloriously at sunrise and fairly through most of the day. I have never known them continue feeding so late into the evening before. There were 14 on the bird bed when we sat down to supper at 6.15. They did not depart until about 6.30 or nearly half an hour after sunset.

Migratory  
birds

I saw the pair of Cooper's Hawks about 9 a.m. flying together over Purple Rock woods, alternately gliding and soaring. After a minute or two the ♀ left her mate and came up over the orchard breasting the strong wind and passing me within long shot gun range. She called three sitting cock times a throaty, guttural single notes which sounded like huck.

Cooper's  
Hawks  
arrives

The Wood Frogs were croaking in the pond below the orchard from noon to 3 P.M. to-day. Edward Garrison heard them yesterday (for the first time) in three different places including Walden woods & the Assabet. He heard Hylas two days earlier than this he tells me.

Wood Frogs

Hylas

Concord, Mass.

1909.

April 2

Clear & cool. Ther. fell to 25° last night & rose to 52° to-day.  
Forenoon calm. Light N.E. wind in afternoon.

Noted for first time this Spring :- White-bellied Swallows, 1. First Swallow

The birds about the house were singing more freely and numerous, this morning than at any time before this season, the Fox Sparrows taking the most prominent part in the delightful chorus with Robins, Bluebirds, Chickadees, Song Sparrows, Juncos & a Flicker adding their voices.

Birds singing  
in early  
morning

I walked to Brick Field at 7.30 without noting anything new to my Spring list but soon after getting back I heard the first White-bellied Swallow and presently saw it, at first darting about among the apple trees & then perched in an elm. In the afternoon I found a Hermit Thrush in Brick Field within our hundred yards of the Spring where I saw a Hermit, probably the same individual, on March 29<sup>th</sup>.

Hermit  
Thrush

During a drive to Walden Pond with Edward Brewster this forenoon (9-11.45) I saw or heard about 6 Bluebirds, 12 or 15 Fox Sparrows, 3 or 4 Robins, 1 Meadow Lark & 2 White-bellied Nuthatches (1 at the old Brewster place, the other in Fairland woods. Song Sparrows were fairly numerous but I saw very few Robins and almost no Juncos.

Birds noted  
during drive  
to Walden  
Pond

There were 16 ♀ of Grosbeaks at one seed bed to-day and 5 or 6 Juncos. An English Sparrow ♀ came to it for the first time.

Hundreds of Wood Frogs croaking in the pond below the orchard most of the afternoon.

Wood Frogs



Concord, Mass.

1909.

April 4

A wild, windy day March-like in character yet sunny  
& not uncomfortably cool. Wind N. W.

Out nearly all day with Edwin De Meritt, in  
forenoon to Ball's Hill, in afternoon along Bigelow's Road,  
to Green Hill and about western base of Punkatasset. The  
afternoon light and coloring were wonderful. The cedars &  
ground junipers on Green Hill were rich brown olive tinged with  
purple, the maple swamps blotched of yellow purple, the gray  
birch tops firm madder brown. I have seen nothing so utterly  
charming before this year as the landscape about Green Hill.  
On its summit we found first deer droppings and tracks  
2 Partridge with 2 more along the old road, all giving us  
fair shots. Heard the first Hyloc (5 or 6) purring in a  
bush just before sunset.

No marked changes have occurred in the local bird  
population for several days. Juncos & Fox Sparrows continue  
in undiminished (but not increased) numbers. Song Sparrows  
are common everywhere but not nearly so numerous as usual.  
There has been no real "rush" of them yet. Robins, too, are  
comparatively scarce. But there were many today there for  
a while past. I heard two in full song at sunset.

Mr. Hatcher's built a dam across Bigelow's Brook on north east  
base of Punkatasset Hill last autumn forming a pretty  
pond of about 1/2 or 3/4 acre with sparse pasture lands on two  
sides & woods on lines of trees on the other two. There were  
no birds there to-day but Ducks, Geese, Kingfishers &  
Sandpeeps are likely to find attractions there on long.  
Found two Gypsey swallows' nests on Green Hill.

Delighted  
trip in  
the woods  
with De Meritt  
Early spring  
evening

Dear Sigis

Five Hyloc

moments  
of  
migratory  
birds

New found.  
made on  
Bigelow's  
Brook

Gypsey swallows

Coneville, Me. 21.

1909.

April 5

Clear & calm. A "weather breeder" day, warmest of spring thus far (65°)

Noted for first time this season:

- Vesper Sparrows, ♂, ♀ at Ricketts place. <sup>Arrival of</sup> Groove Finches

The farm Phoebe and the one at the Ricketts place were singing Farm & Ricketts  
in their usual stations this morning for the first time this year. House Phoebe

Arrival

The birds just mentioned were the only ones noted to-day  
which seemed to have just reached here from further south. There  
was no apparent increase in the numbers of Robins & Song Sparrows  
and I begin to think that all our local representations of both  
species must have come about they are still so comparatively  
scarce. The Fox Sparrows and Juncos were appreciably less  
numerous than they were yesterday. It is probable that nearly  
half of them passed on northward last night and that the  
flight is nearing its end. Both species sang freely to-day.

The Fox Sparrows feeding on the feed bed under our  
dining room windows invariably run into the neighboring cluster  
of Lilacs (a distance of only a few yards) when disturbed by distant  
sight or sounds, all scattering off at once as quickly as a band of  
startled rats. But if we open the back door suddenly they take  
wing. The Juncos always fly when alarmed not into the depths  
of this thicket but up into the branches of the trees.

Fox Sparrows  
run to cover  
when alarmed  
by distant  
sights or  
sounds

Concord, Mass.

1909  
April 6

Sunny but hazy, the sky clouding over completely  
after sunset. Very warm (40°-62°) with strong S. W. wind.

Notes for first time this Spring:- Sapsucker bad at farm; Sapsucker  
Kingfisher one flying over river on Ball's Hill. Kingfisher  
again

The Sapsucker was in the little grove behind our farm Sapsucker  
where I see one nearly every year at this season (usually a  
little later. It was clinging to the trunk of a gray birch  
in a listless attitude, looking, indeed, as if asleep. There was  
a male Downy within two yards of it on another tree.

The Fox Sparrows left us last night. None visited the  
seed bed to-day but I heard one sing a few times in  
the orchard. There were a few juncos about and two

Fox Sparrows  
depart

of them came to the seed bed. Song Sparrows were  
fairly numerous. I heard about a dozen on the way to  
Ball's Hill. One singing to its mate & chasing her by turns)  
regularly extended & retracted its left wing & then its right

Song Sparrows  
increase.

One extends  
& retracts  
its wings  
while singing

during nearly every utterance of its song. I do not remember this  
action although I have been here before.

Concord, Mass

1909.  
April 6  
(no 2)

Three White-bellied Swallows were dashing about in the early forenoon and late afternoon, visiting all my boxes both at the farm & on the Boston floor, alighting at the entrance holes & peeping in, twittering and calling in their glad, winsome way, reminding me of the days of my youth when they were so numerous in Cambridge.

Tree Swallows

The pair of Bluebirds that have taken possession of the box in the apple tree across the road from which I took the clutch of 11 eggs last week were breeding this morning. I saw one fly to the box & enter it with a bill full of dry grass.

Bluebirds  
building  
nest

Saw a very dark colored Shrike in Bend's pasture. It alighted on the topmost spray of an isolated white pine.

Shrike

Wood Pecks crawling everywhere all day long & to-night. I heard & saw them in the flooded wine meadows, were on a number in sunlight, at those songs, through my glass, I was surprised to find that their coloring was wholly unlike that in summer & autumn. It looked almost black with a greenish tinge. The black head stripe looked deeper darker than the entire bill.

Wood Pecks  
their dark  
coloring at  
this season



Barnard, Mass.

1909.

April 7

Sunny but very hazy. Light S. W. wind. "Warm as summer."  
My registering thermometer did not fall below  $50^{\circ}$  in last 24 hours.  
It rose to  $75^{\circ}$  to-day.

Noted for first time this season: - Purple Finch  $\delta$  in gray plumage Arrived.  
at Farm, in orchard behind house, in full song throughout day.  
Field Sparrows,  $\delta$  in full song in our berry pasture 8-9:30 A.M.

The effect of this sudden warm wave (after prolonged coldish General  
weather) on the movements of the birds is what might be expected. Migratory  
It has caused marked & widespread activity & increase or decrease murmurs  
where before matters remained almost as a standstill. The whole  
country has become swarmed with birds to-day and they were all  
in the highest possible spirits, singing, calling, chasing one another  
to & fro, from daybreak to dark. There were fewer arrivals  
(only two noted above) of species than one might have looked  
for but the increase in the number of individuals was very  
considerable with several species.

It is evident that the majority of our local Robins Robins  
population arrived early this morning. Hitherto the birds have  
been scarce about the farm but to-day they scattered  
numerously all over it singing a little & calling a great deal.  
The males were almost constantly squabbling with one another,  
rising straight upward in couples to a height of 6 or 8 feet &

then descending slowly to the ground keeping all the while well to the  
& making a loud clapping sound with their wings. (I heard it at 6:30 P.M.)

Cowdell, Mass.

1909.  
April 7  
(hs 2/)

Hitherto I have seen at the most no more than  
3 Tree Swallows at one time about the bird houses at  
the rear of our farm house. To-day there were no less  
than 12 birds. Two of the boxes seemed to have been  
taken permanent possession of by pairs of Swallows who  
remained about them the whole time. The ♀ of one pair  
came to the box with a bill full of dry grass but  
finally dropped it without entering the hole, perhaps  
because I was standing directly beneath her although  
I doubt if she could have been seriously engaged  
in nest building so very early in the season.  
She remained on the box & her mate in a neighboring offer  
the while a man was grafting the two within a few  
yards of both birds. It was not less interesting than  
delightful to see all these Swallows circling in a compact  
flock over the orchard & then separating into pairs to visit the boxes.

White-bellied  
Swallows

♀ collecting  
building  
materials.

Barnard, Mass.

1909.  
April 7  
(No 3)

The Sapsucker was in nearly the same place behind our barn again to-day. I saw him drinking sap which dripped from the trunk of a gray birch which had been completely girdled by rows of holes about six feet above the ground, no doubt by his sharp pointed bill for I passed the tree probably yesterday without noticing the injury.

Sapsucker  
drinking  
birch sap.

No less than three flocks of Canada Geese passed over the farm to-day. Pat heard the first flock about 8.30 A. M. but did not see them. The second flock, containing about 70 birds, was seen by one of Richardson's men half an hour later, passing over Birch Field. The third flock, consisting of 16 birds, came over the orchard at 2 P. M. flying N. E. at a great height, in the approved V. formation. I was delighted to see them & to hear their fine sonorous voices again.

Canada  
Geese.

Concord, Mass.

1909.  
April 7  
(No 4)

Early this forenoon I sent one of Richardson's men Young  
up into the big white pine near the path through Gray Squirrels  
Pulpit Rock woods to ~~there~~ <sup>search</sup> for a Gray Squirrel's in nest.  
nest on the under side of which we could see clusters  
of gypsey white eggs. He could not get to it for  
it was near the extremity of a long branch but he  
pushed it off with a pole. In falling it broke into  
fragments. When these reached the ground we were  
surprised to find among them four young Gray Squirrels.  
They were of about the size of large Field Mice. Their  
eyes were tightly closed, their heads, bodies & tails absolutely  
without trace of hair or fur & of a warm flesh color.

One showed a slightly bleeding wound, the others seemed  
unhurt. When I picked them up they squeaked shrilly  
but made no attempt to bite.

Like rats, I left two at the base of the nest tree & three  
were gone before noon. The other two found at the foot of  
a neighboring pine in which I had seen two weathers Squirrels, were  
there at 4 P.M. The weathers showed barely any this even & under the bark.



Concord, Mass.

1909.

May 1

Returned to the Farm House at Concord to day after an absence of more than two weeks. One of the first things I did was to look systematically for Bats in the loft of our open wood shed. There were none to be found there.

Bats in  
woodshed.

- " 2 Second search for Bats in woodshed. None there.
- " 3 Third " " " " " " " " "
- " 4 Fourth " " " " " " " " " but a light brown one, evidently of another kind, found clinging to a beam in our barn cellar.
- " 5 Found two of the small dark brown Bats in the wood shed this morning clinging to the roof boards about 12 inches apart in the usual place.
- " 6 Four Bats in the shed roof this morning clinging in pairs.
- " 7 Ten " " " " " " " all together in a cluster
- " 8 " " " " " " " " " " " "
- " 9 Twelve " " " " " " " " " " " "
- " 10 " " " " " " " " " " " "
- " 11 Woodshed not visited
- " 12 " " "
- " 13 " " "
- " 14 Twenty-two Bats in " " " " " " " " "
- " 15 Woodshed not visited
- 16 to 25 " " "
- " 26 Twenty-four Bats in the shed roof, and about ones.

Concord, Mass.

1909.

March &

April.

May

During my first visit to Concord this spring (March 18 - April 8) I saw no deer signs anywhere except on the top of Green Hill where (on April 4) I found fresh droppings under some ferns. One when I returned to the farm house from Washington & Cambridge on May 1 the foot paths and cart roads in our woods were marked everywhere (except on Balls Hill) with more or less recent tracks of various sizes. There occurred most numerous along the lane leading from our old barn to the Piche's place. Among them were the footprints of a buck of unusual size. This animal visited the flower garden at the rear of the house on the night of the 3<sup>rd</sup> or early morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> when I found his big hoof marks everywhere among the flowers. Apparently he had not injured anything except the hollyhocks of which a number had been cropped down close to the ground.

May 7

As James was driving back from town this morning he saw a good sized doe standing by the roadside about 50 yds. south of our big elm. As he approached near the corner over the wall into the field on the west side of the road where she joined her mate, a buck of the largest size. As James drove slowly past within ten yards of the pair they remained motionless gazing at him. Gilbert saw them then from the road and from our parlor windows a little later. Still later (10.45) the mail carrier passed them in his wagon followed by his big dog who seemed unaware of their presence. They were in this corner of the field nearly half an hour, Gilbert thinks.

Benson saw them in the hollow where the brook flows under the road looking to his woods as he drove by town about 7 P.M. When he returned about 10 P.M. they were standing exactly where he left them within a few yards of the road.

Doer

Bowdoin, Mass

1909.  
May 1

It must have been four or five years ago  
that Henry P. Richardson found a pair of Box Tortoises  
together at the foot of Fairham Cliff and sent them  
to me by his son. I liberated them near Pulpit Rock.  
Within seventy yards of this place you help out on  
the opposite (South) side of the swampy run I found  
what was no doubt one of them to-day. It  
had apparently been dead two or three weeks for  
the soft parts were so decomposed as to be in  
a semi liquid condition & the shell had begun to  
slough off in places. The creature lay in the middle  
of a wood path into which it may have crawled  
to bask in the sun early last month. It is  
possible the cross killed it but if so they had  
not apparently eaten any of the flesh & I am now

Box  
Tortoise  
found  
dead in  
Barnet  
Run.

inclined to believe it died a natural death. Neither of  
these turtles has been seen before since they were liberated here.

B Concord, Mass.

1909.

May 4

As I was at work with three of my men in the flower garden at the rear of our farm house this forenoon a Chipping Sparrow appeared closely pursued by a ferocious Sharp-shinned Hawk. As the Chippy was passing over the top of a large apple tree it suddenly closed its wings and dropped down through the upper tier of branches. The Hawk attempted to follow but was stopped by the interlacing twigs. Mounting upward again it circled about the tree and then dashed in from one side driving the Chippy out & into the next tree. As it again circled it passed over me within 20 ft. when I flung my cap at it & shouted. It kept on ascending appearing to notice me but just before entering the tree top turned back and soaring upward in arcs to a great height drifted off to the westward. I

Sharp-shinned  
Hawks  
chases a  
Chippy bird  
fails to  
catch it

doubt if it would have got the Chippy had I not interfered. I saw it drop at least twice apparently from under the tail although I am not sure about this.



Concord, Mass.

1909  
May 13

Clear & warm with fresh west wind.

At intervals through the past spring I have started nest of  
Partridge  
a hen Partridge on or near Ball's Hill. On its north side  
or rather base, near the Swamp, Pat flushed her from her  
nest this morning. It was under a spreading mountain Laurel  
([These were all I saw but Gilbert counted eleven the next day])  
that I planted and gathered six eggs. <sup>^</sup>Stranger to say I  
have heard no cock bird drumming anywhere in the neighborhood  
of the hill this year nor have I seen one there. If I  
remember rightly the same thing happened here several years  
ago yet the hen hatched & reared her brood. The old  
drumming stand on the stone wall near the big red  
maple has not been used by Partridges for a number of years.

Found fresh tracks of a mountain Pheasant to-day Pheasant  
in an open, sandy place in Pine Park. Heard one cross  
across the river on the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Concord, Mass.

1909.  
May 18

Clear and very warm through middle of day but fairly cloudy at sunset with chilly east wind.

North-bound Warblers have been passing in a steady stream then lost them or for some days but they have been scattered everywhere through the woods and orchards & I have seen but find collected in only one place. Now have I met with any of the rarer species as yet.

Migratory

Last evening I heard a peculiar cry coming, after dark,

Sora Rank

from somewhere well out towards the middle of Great Meadows.

It sounded most like the cry of the Sora but was shriller and less musical, as well as given more frequently & vigorously.

This evening I heard it again, much nearer at hand, as I was sitting in my corner in Bear Dam Gorge, and at once decided that the bird must be a Sora with a peculiar voice. This conclusion was confirmed when I heard what seemed to be the same bird give the typical whining cry call of the Sora. The cry was given only a dozen times or so; at wide & irregular intervals.

Concord, Mass.

1909

May 15  
(No 2)

As twilight fell Wilson's Snipe began rising Wilson's  
and flying about over Great Meadows from which Snipe.

the river flood has just receded leaving pools  
of stagnant surface water among the upspringing grass.

I could not see any of them but judging by their calls  
there must have been half a dozen or more. For

a time I heard only the Scaup note which, as Scaup note  
is usual when the birds are taking short flights

from place to place of a calm evening, had a deep,  
guttural quality. At length, when it was nearly

dark, one began drumming, evidently flying Drumming  
in a great circle that embraced nearly the entire

meadow and heaven was fully a mile in circumference.

For fifteen minutes or more I listened delightedly  
to its weird melody which thrilled me as it  
has never failed to do ever since I first heard it.

Concord, Mass.

1909  
May 15  
(no 3)

in the 7'ish Pond Swamp upwards of forty years Drumming  
age. Although I have been accustomed to refer to Wilson's  
it in my notes as "drumming" this term is really  
inappropriate. Nor do I like "bleating" much better.  
"Skimming" is perhaps the most suitable name of  
all (I think I originated it when a boy) for the  
sound is not unlike that of a Dove's cooing,  
yet different in some respects, being very much  
louder for one thing and altogether more interesting  
and impressive, having an eerie quality, <sup>peculiarly its own and</sup> perhaps due  
in part to the conditions under which it is most  
commonly heard.



Troused, Mass.

1909.  
May 15  
[No. 4]

Besides the Snipe & Sora I heard many other interesting, if common birds, which floating in my course this evening at the mouth of Brown Don Cragen.

Sounds at  
evening in  
the marshes

While the daylight still held there were Red-wings and Swamp Sparrows singing far & near and a Wood Thrush chanting out the Glee of Holden's Hill. A King bird mounted displayed and went through its tumbling dog flights. As twilight deepened the Bittern (two of them) "jumped" a few times. Then a Whippoorwill began in the woods on the northern edge of the meadows. A Greater Yellow-legs & a Spotted Sandpiper were bounding through the marshes, casting at short intervals. Hylas were jumping by thousands all about me. These are the same meadows over which last high carnival after there in island ponds have become silent & nearly so. I heard them Bull Frogs Bull Frogs croak. Five Musk rats in sight at once, all swimming. Musk rats

Hylas

Bull Frogs

Musk rats

Concord, Mass.

1909.

May 15  
(No 5)

The four muskrats just referred to were in the  
river near the foot of Brown Down Rapids. Two were  
perhaps thirty yards apart crossing the stream, the  
other two close in shore among button bushes apparently  
engaged in courtship for one was following the  
other to & fro uttering all the while the peculiar low,  
shree, quavering, whispering sound so often heard  
at this season. Shortly after this one of the  
muskrats started up the rapids. I followed it in  
my canoe paddling slowly and silently directly in  
its wake and some twenty feet behind it. As far  
as I could make out it did not notice me for  
it kept steadily on until we reached Dalins Hill, a

distance of about quarter of a mile, diving repeatedly, it  
is true, but always in the deliberate, silent manner  
which the muskrat adopts when not alarmed, elevating its  
rump & tail just as it disapproves & keeping one thought on  
the canoe. But when at length I tried to pass it & was almost  
about it, I drew with a great splash & dashed back.

Concord, Mass.

1909  
May 16

Cloudy & cool with strong E. wind. Heavy rain in  
early morning and late afternoon.

Started up river at 2 P. M. Sailed nearly all the way to  
the Horsebills on the Assabet. Paddled back (5-6 P. M.)  
Red-wings as numerous as I have ever known them to be  
along this stretch of river. I never have seen over forty, almost  
evenly divided as to sex. Bobolinks in fair numbers. Some  
of their best breeding grounds along the meadow bushes opposite  
the Hunt farm have grown up to dense thickets of hardsack  
or - tree bushes. Of Kingbirds & Yellow Warblers I saw as many  
as usual. Spotted Sandpipers scarce. I noted only a single pair.  
Robins singing in every direction between Hunt's & Reed bridges.  
A Flicker hunting on the Buttrick place. As I was paddling  
under North Bridge I happened to look up and then directly  
over me, perched in the top of a large oak, sat a ♂ Sparrow Hawk  
preening his feathers.

A Bittern was jumping in Miss Throck's meadow. Two  
others came flying from a distance rather high in air. One  
descended on its wing & alighted near the jumpers. The  
other kept on over the marsh towards the eastward.  
I saw a Bittern passing over the east end of Rock Hill this  
forenoon. They fly about freely in the day time  
when the weather is dark & hazy.

Bitterns

Danvers, Mass.

1909.

May 16

(hs 2 //

Swallows were flying low over Great Meadows in considerable numbers. I must have seen considerably more

Swallows  
on the  
river meadows

than 100. Chiefly House & Bank Swallows with a few White-bellies. I heard the cork-in-the-bottle notes of Bank Swallows repeatedly but identified only one bird of this species by sight. There were no Martins here nor Bayliss up the river. I saw only a very few Swifts.

Solitary Sandpipers were scattered along the river as far as I went. I saw at least seven or eight.

Solitary  
Sandpipers

They occurred singly usually on small patches of bare mud among bushes or under spreading maples or willows.

I passed several within a few yards without seeing to alarm them whereas others would rise with flushed cries & fly off through the trees or across the river. They are very sedentary birds often spending hours if not days feeding on some mud bank only a few yards square.



Cornwall, Mass.

1909.  
May 16  
(No. 3)

As I was passing Dade's Hill on my way home  
about six o'clock I noticed a number of birds in  
a small swampy white oak standing on the river bank.  
Approaching them closely I found they were White-bellied  
Swarblers, nine in number. They were sitting perfectly  
motionless among some rather densely imbricated branches  
about the middle of the tree which was well covered  
with small leaves. I watched them for some time &  
finally left them there. I am inclined to think  
that they had gone to roost for the night in this  
white oak although they may have left it later.  
The sky was densely clouded at the time & the  
light already dim.

White-bellied  
Swarblers  
roosting!  
in oak  
on river  
bank

Concord, Mass.

1909.  
May 18

In the oak woods lying between Birch Island and  
Green Field I found the nest of a Solitary Vireo this  
afternoon. It held three fresh eggs perfectly marked with fine  
spots of reddish brown. I was attracted to them by the  
anxious scolding notes of the parent birds who were mobbing  
a jay. They darted about his head like angry bees stinging  
at him all over with their bills & evidently annoying him a  
good deal although he kept on hopping from twig to twig  
picking under every leaf as if he thought it might conceal a bird's  
nest. Perhaps, after all, he was merely looking for brown tits (for  
I saw him tear one of their nests open & scatter the contents  
with a quick shake of the head) but the vireos were evidently  
convinced that he was seeking their treasure. After he had  
flown away they continued in the tops of some tall oaks  
where they had been with the jay. Of course I knew  
their nest must be lower down & after waiting for

Nest of  
Solitary Vireo  
3 eggs

Lowell Mass.

1909.

May 18  
(No 2)

Some time in the rain before that one of them could  
go to it I began to look for it among some small  
bushy white ferns that grow under the oaks. Within  
less than a minute I discovered it in one of these  
ferns at a height of only about five feet and within  
twenty yards of where I had been standing. The light  
gray & yellowish coloring of its outer surface and the  
shaggy character of the material made it very conspicuous  
among the dark green foliage of the fern which was not  
dense enough to afford it much concealment. The Jay  
might have found it easily enough had he not looked  
too high up in the tree. When I found it on  
my way back one of the birds was sitting. I did  
not disturb her for the Jay had returned & was leaving her.

for off. Solitary Vireos are exceptionally numerous here this  
spring. There is one singing at Davis Hill, another behind Benson's  
& a third near Popple Rock. The nest found to day was empty  
& deserted when I next visited it on May 26. No doubt the Jay found & took it.

Nest of  
Solitary Vireo  
3 yr

Concord, Mass.

1909  
May 19

Partly cloudy & very cool with brisk E. wind.

Wilson's  
Snipe  
drums in  
swamp  
along the

Early this morning before the east wind started the river was perfectly calm & thinly veiled in mist, the sky filled with fleecy clouds. The sun shone dimly at intervals through both cloud & mist. These conditions lasted up to about 8.30. At 7.30 I heard a Snipe drumming in the direction of Great Meadows. He kept it up without cessation for more than half an hour, usually drumming about every eight seconds although the intervals of silence were sometimes double that length. The humming sound ordinarily lasted about three or four seconds at each repetition. Although I paddled up river for some distance and thereby got rather near where the bird was performing I could not see him partly because of the misty atmosphere & partly because there were so many Swallows flying over the meadows.



Concord, Mass.

1909

May 19  
(No. 2)

About 5 P.M. I heard the Swifts drawing again.

Wilson's Swift  
drawing in  
grass daylight

At this time the air was perfectly clear the sky filled with fleecy clouds through which the sun shone at intervals. I strolled up river in a corner at once. On reaching Beaver Dam Boggs I ran the corner into the grass for the Swifts seemed to be not far off. For many minutes I looked for him in vain although twice he came nearly near me. The bright light in the sky dazzled my eyes & the sweetness & softness bothered me. Moreover I was looking, as it proved, too low down for when at length I caught sight of the Swift he was flying at a great height, fully five hundred feet, I thought, above the meadow & only just beneath the lower strata of clouds. For the next fifteen minutes I kept my glass steadily on him. During this time he flew, for the most part, in great circles perhaps

Coward, Mass.

1909

May 19  
(hr 3)

Diving of  
Wilson's Snipe

three hundred yards in diameter and over the  
brightest part of the meadow but towards the close of  
his flight he repeatedly doubled back after describing  
not more than half or even one third of a full circle.  
The full circle was made from left to right that is  
from east to south to west to north to east again &  
so on over and over the same course. When he turned  
back he retraced his course and then turned again,  
swinging back & forth from east to south and west  
and back to south & east etc. The diving sound  
came to my ears every eight or ten seconds &  
immediately following the bird dipped downward to within  
scarcely up again to his former level. During some  
of these downward curves the descended portion  
stayed for a distance of 40 or 50 feet, during  
others the drop was not more than 15 or 20

Cornwall, Mass.

1909  
May 19  
(no 4)

Drawing of  
Wilson's Snipe

fast and at a very gentle incline. Sometimes  
the undulations followed one another so closely  
and regularly that the bird's course was not unlike  
that of a gliding Goldfinch or House sparrow but as  
a rule he would fly for several rods on a level  
plane between one dip & the next. When moving  
thus he sometimes glided on set wings for a few rods.  
At all other times, whether flying level or swinging  
first downward & then upward, he moved his  
wings incessantly. I could detect no difference in  
their motion when the swimming sound was  
heard from that when the bird was moving  
on a level plane & nothing was heard that  
marked any ease. When he ceased his long flight  
he merely fell down into the mud with  
closed or half closed wings & shortly as snipe  
~~are accustomed to do at all times~~

Concord, Mass.

1909  
May 19  
(no 5)

are accustomed to do at all seasons when descending Wilson's  
Swamp  
to their feeding grounds from high in air.

It is very late in the Spring, of course, for  
Swamp to be lingering here and the presence &  
fear of this particular bird in respect to drumming  
lead me to suspect that he may have a mate  
and a nest somewhere in the meadows where  
he is hunting.

Twice this afternoon I saw a fine adult ♂  
Marsh Hawk beating the Great Meadows. On each  
occasion his presence created a great disturbance  
among the Red-wings who followed him with  
loud cries of alarm darting down at him from  
above as they do at Crows & at Killdeer, too,  
for that matter. I wonder if they have any real  
reason to fear either the Marsh Hawk or the Killdeer.

Red wings  
mobbing a  
Marsh Hawk



Bowdoin, Mass

1909.

May 20

Brilliantly clear with cool east wind.

About seven o'clock this morning I saw a female  
Black-throated Green Warbler collecting shreds of bark from the  
stems of down dead alders behind Davis' this. After obtaining  
a bitful of this material she flew up into the very top  
of a cotton pine fully 50 feet in height approaching a summit  
or so later at nearly the point where I lost sight of her  
and descending to the alders again. As I saw her do all  
this three in succession I concluded that she must have  
a pretty finished nest in the top of the pine, a loose  
bushy-topped, down-shagreened tree. The place where she entered  
it was not more than three or four feet below the very  
topmost boughs.

nest of  
Black-throated  
Green Warbler  
in cotton  
pine top of crop  
pine

Four Least Sandpipers were feeding on down mud  
that was dug out of one boat covered boat entrance. I  
got very near them & saw their yellowish brown legs distinctly.

Least  
Sandpiper

Concord, Mass.

1909  
May 20  
[No 2.]

About 7 a.m. I heard the flight call of Greater Yellowlegs. Yellow-legs and looking out over the river saw ten of them five birds flying low over the marsh towards the eastward. They were divided into two bunches of five each, but these were only a few rods apart. Two hours later Gilbert & I started five large Yellow-legs from a muddy place on the edge of our brook canal.

As I was taking a walk with our Irish Terrier, Garry, Young Cotton Tails. This afternoon he started four young Cotton-Tail Rabbits about  $\frac{1}{4}$  grown: I saw them spring up from the ground among some maples, all at once & from apparently the same spot. They made off in different directions but as I was there the day quickly overtook & bit at least three of them & so badly that I fear they cannot recover. When caught they squealed shrilly very like rats. After being bitten crouched flat on the ground, evidently in the hope of escaping further observation. They were well fed & their eyes were wide open.

Concord, Mass.

1909.  
May 21

The Snipe (I assume it was the same individual Drumming  
I have noted as q. or q. later) was drumming over the river Wilson's Snipe  
in front of the cabin at 7 a.m. I watched him for  
several minutes during which he flew in small circles  
(not over 50 yards in diameter) and in zig-zags, coming  
back and forth in every direction over a space of only  
a few acres. He drummed repeatedly when, as I was  
able to reach given birds, he dipped only a few  
feet (certainly not more than 5 or 6) below the level  
on which he was flying. On these occasions the  
drumming sound was brief and fainter than usual.  
When, as happened a few times, he descended heavily  
or took flight it was much longer and more explosive.  
He moved his wings all the time I had him

in sight the beats being very regular & slower than  
in normal flight, more like butterfly wing-motion, I thought.

The morning was cool, the sky partly cloudy. over  
The Snipe drummed a few times about 8 a.m. Morning brilliantly clear (cloudless & cloudless) & warm  
with light breeze wind.

Cambridge, Mass.

1909.  
May 21  
(No 2)

Cloudy & cold with strong, chill east wind.

Pine Linnet  
in first song  
in our garden

Shortly after reaching Cambridge in this afternoon

I was walking in our garden when I heard an unfamiliar  
bird song. It was much like that of a Goldfinch (S. tristis)  
but all the notes were higher pitched and less full and  
strong. Some of them were very sweet and nearly all were  
musical in quality although a few inclined too much to  
whyness to be wholly pleasing. Like the Goldfinch the bird  
sang on and on, ceasingly, for many moments at a time, but  
in rather subdued tones and sometimes lotes over. He was  
evidently very near me, apparently in the Rosemanian off the Ave,  
but I could not see him. At first I could not imagine  
what he might be although I dimly recalled having heard the  
same song years ago. At length he interpolated among his other  
notes the unmistakable sw-e-c-c-e of the Pine Linnet & thus  
myself was solved. He sang then twice in all.

Character of  
song.

Cambridge, Mass

1909

May 25

Sunny for the most part but with the day half-filled at times by dark masses of clouds. Very cool with high N. wind. There must have been a sudden drop in the temperature last night for yesterday was warm and at 10 P. M. the air was soft & mild

The first really heavy bird flight of the season occurred last night, started, no doubt, by the warm moon of yesterday which succeeded a prolonged spell of very cool weather. When I stepped out on our back porch at eight o'clock this morning I was greeted by the songs of a great number & variety of birds coming from various parts of the garden. Within less than a minute I heard a Bay-breast, Black-poll, Chestnut-sided Bay-breast Black & Yellow Warbler, a Wisconsin Black-cop, a Winter Wren Warbler and a Lincoln's Finch. Others were added to the list in the course of the next hour or two. Including our locally resident birds such as Robins, Chipping etc. I noted just 30 species in the Garden during the forenoon. J. H. Baker whom I found there when I first went out reported a large flock of migrants of various kinds which he had found earlier in the morning in the Maple Swamp near the timberline road and a smaller flock, including what he took to be a ♂ Tennessee Warbler (he doubted its plumage & song correctly) in an apple orchard on Hudson Avenue. Quite evidently, then, there must have been a rather general inflow into the Cambridge Region although the flock in our Garden seemed to be the only one in this immediate neighborhood for I visited the Dr. Myerson place this forenoon without finding a single native bird which I noted only a Blue Jay which was working up Brattle & Longworth St. a Goldfinch Baker saw in our Garden where he thought was a Mourning Warbler but I failed to find it.

North-bound  
migrants  
swarming  
in our  
Garden

Large flock  
of migrants  
in Maple Swamp

Tennessee?/  
Warbler

Mourning  
Warbler



Cambridge, Mass.

1909.  
May 25

Birds noted in our Garden, 8-11 a.m.

1. Turdus aliciae 1 large bird with another probably same kind but <sup>not identified</sup>
2. Mercia migratoria ♂ & ♀ with white lining to building
3. Galeoscoptes carolinensis; ♂ & ♀ Remarkably fine singer.
4. Minutella varia ♀
5. Helminthophila rubricapilla ♂ & ♀
6. Compsothlypis a. usneae ♂ & ♀
7. Dendroica aestiva ♂ & ♀
8. " caerulea ♂ & ♀
9. " maculosa 2 ♂ & ♀
10. " pennsylvanica 3 ♂ & ♀
11. " castanea ♂ & ♀
12. " striata ♂ & ♀
13. " virens ♂ & ♀
14. Scirrus auricapilla ♂ & ♀
15. " noveboracensis (2) 1 & ♀
- [Geothlypis philadelphia? Seen by boy visitor, in lilacs. He is very sure of it.]
16. Wilsonia pusilla ♂ & ♀
17. " canadensis ♂ & ♀
18. Vireo olivaceus ♂ & ♀
19. " flavifrons ♂ & ♀
20. Spizella socialis ♂ & ♀, 1.
21. Melospiza lincolni ♂ & ♀ song three & a.m. Seen dozens of times but never met. <sup>Kept in lilacs</sup> Very shy
22. Hydenotes ludoviciana ♂ & ♀. Superb singer.
23. Icterus galbula (♂ & ♀) 30 Turdus swainsoni 1 well seen & <sup>well seen & pink head</sup>
24. Corvus americana Heard in early morn.
25. Cyanocitta cristata 1.
26. Empidonax minimus 1 seen bird. Well seen.
27. Chondestes pelagicus Heard overhead
28. Coccyzus americanus 1 coming. Also seen.
29. Spizus tristis 1 & ♀.

Concord, Mass.

1909  
May 25  
(Wed)

In the afternoon Poschi and I went to Concord hoping to find a lot of interesting migrants congregated along the river-front at Balls Hill where they usually collect in great numbers when a heavy flight is checked by a cold north wind from which the hill shelters them perfectly. We were disappointed in this expectation, however, for when we reached the cabin about six o'clock there were only a few birds of summer resident species there. On Pine Ridge I saw a Black and Yellow Warbler & heard a Black-burnian. These two were literally the only warblers found and it is not unlikely that the Black-burnian was better for the summer in the pines where we found him.

No signs  
of any  
unusual  
flight on  
Balls Hill

Every afternoon at this season, when there is a cold northerly or easterly wind, Balls Hill is a favorite resort of Chipping Swifts. There were fully one hundred there at six o'clock this evening, and for an hour later, sailing about the west end of the hill just above the tops of the oaks which were covered with young foliage. I have not seen as many before since the summer of 1903 when the Swifts, like the Swallows, suffered heavy losses during the cold rains storm which occurred in June of that year. For two or three years after that they were very scarce but during the past two years they have been increasing rapidly. It is possible, I am sure, that the birds seen this evening were migrants but even probably, in my opinion, that they represented the large population of the more common forms of Concord.

Rej. Swallow  
Swift to  
Balls Hill

Concord, Mass.

1909.  
May 26

Brilliantly clear with light west wind. Bottom warm.

Pardie and I spent the entire forenoon in the woods walking to the farm by way of Davis Hill, Bush Island, Green Field & Root Field, returning via Holden's Hill. The only north-bound migrants we saw were an House Wren, a Water Thrush & a White-throated Sparrow. If there was any trip like the flight here yesterday morning that there was at Cambridge the birds would have passed on or declined some before we arrived late yesterday afternoon. The chances are, however, that no such flight visited the Concord Region.

No bird  
seen or  
compared

While at the farm this forenoon we heard a Yellow-throated bird singing loudly and steadily in the elm just behind the wood shed. At moment later I discovered him on the west which was living in the fork of a chest branch that left the trunk some 15 or 20 feet above the ground. He sang for several minutes without moving anything save his head which was raised high and tilted about from side to side after the manner of his kind. The female warbler was quietly feeding among the branches only a few yards

<sup>♂</sup>  
Yellow-throated  
bird singing  
on west

Worcester, Mass.

1909.

May 26

(No 2)

About 8 o'clock this morning I heard the Single drum  
then or four times as I was standing near the cabin.

Masses  
Single  
drumming

The sound came very faintly to my ears but I made  
it out distinctly, nonetheless. The bird was evidently flying  
over the meadows (or perhaps the western end) of Great  
meadows. I wish I could be here later to ascertain  
whether or no he stays on but this will probably be  
my very last chance to hear him as I am not likely  
to return for several weeks. There can be little doubt,  
I think, that he is settled for the season and  
preparing to breed if, indeed, his mate be not already  
sitting on her egg somewhere out in the broad meadows  
over which he makes his humming descents.

We found a House Wren to-day on the Plastic floor. House Wren

He was in full song about 11 a.m. in an apple tree  
in the middle of the grassfield near the apple cellar.

Cambridge, Mass.

1909.  
May 27

We had our Cat birds in the Garden last year but our offspring there on the 11<sup>th</sup> of this month and to-day I saw two birds together, no doubt a mated pair. The ♂ was the first to come, and he has been in full song ever since his arrival. His notes, excepting he is the very finest performer I ever listened to having a great variety of notes and a remarkably strong, clear, sweetly modulated voice. Contrary to a rule which I have hitherto found almost if not quite without exception he frequently gives the same note twice and occasionally even three in quick succession after the habit of the Norway Thrasher. His delivery, however, is, like that of our bird, less rapid than that of a Thrasher and his voice is somewhat less loud. At morning and evening when the twilight is comparatively quiet he makes the Garden fairly ring. Therefore I have not heard him mimic the notes of any other species of bird.

The Cat birds  
return to  
our Garden.

The ♂ a  
deaf  
songer.



Cambridge, Mass.

1909

May 30

Walked through Mt. Auburn and Cambridge Countryside this afternoon in company with H. A. Packer. Weather clear & cool with light west wind.

In Mt. Auburn we heard singing two Robins, a Chipping, a Red-eye and a Baltimore Oriole. A Kingfisher rolling by the long narrow pond where Swans were feeding kept. A Phoebe's nest containing 4 or 5 young fairly feathered & almost ready to fly, was built on one of the iron supports that support the bridge over this pond. Both parent Phoebes were catching flies over the water near this bridge. The country was swarming with House Sparrows. I saw no Squirrels. The Oaks & other trees appeared in fine condition and free from insect pests. All of them were covered with tongue fern.

The salt marsh at the head of Cambridge Countryside was thronged with the shiny yellow blossoms of Pentstemon. Solidago sempervirens growing vigorously & abundantly still along the ditches. A Meadow Lark and a Song Sparrow singing in this marsh, the former perched on a stick, the latter on a branch pole. A Red-wing singing loud out on the edge of the marsh & a Spotted Sandpiper calling from the water. In the country proper a ♀ Meadow Lark, very common, feeding on closely clipped lawn. We got within ten yards of her. In the broad meadow on the Joe Castle farm we saw a Meadow Lark hover over and drop into down tall grass as if alighting on her nest. A ♂ Meadow Lark singing here and a large Song Sparrow, also, his Robins. Started a flock on the round topped Cedar tree by the marsh & saw Crows flying about. House Sparrows everywhere. Salt marshes on this side of river still untouched from Union Hill to Brighton Bridge & beyond.

Visit to  
Mt. Auburn  
Cambridge  
Countryside

Nest of  
Phoebe in  
Mt. Auburn

Salt marsh

Meadow Lark

Cambridge, Mass.

1909  
May 30

My neighbor Mr. Blackwell tells me that the Cat-bird in our garden sang through practically the whole of last night keeping two of the members of the Blackwell family awake. I heard him at midnight and then later on, before daybreak, pouring out his rich and varied notes with ceaseless energy & vigor. The night was cloudless and cool with a half moon which shed a clear & subdued light. I cannot remember ever before hearing a Cat-bird sing at night although the Mockingbird habitually does so when there is a moon.

Cat-bird  
sings  
all night

June 1

The Cat-bird sang freely at sunset last evening, and was silent after that until 9.30 P.M. when he began again and sang almost continuously until 11.30 when I dropped asleep. Whenever I awoke (so it was many

times) between midnight & daybreak this remarkable bird was working the garden ring with his songs.







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